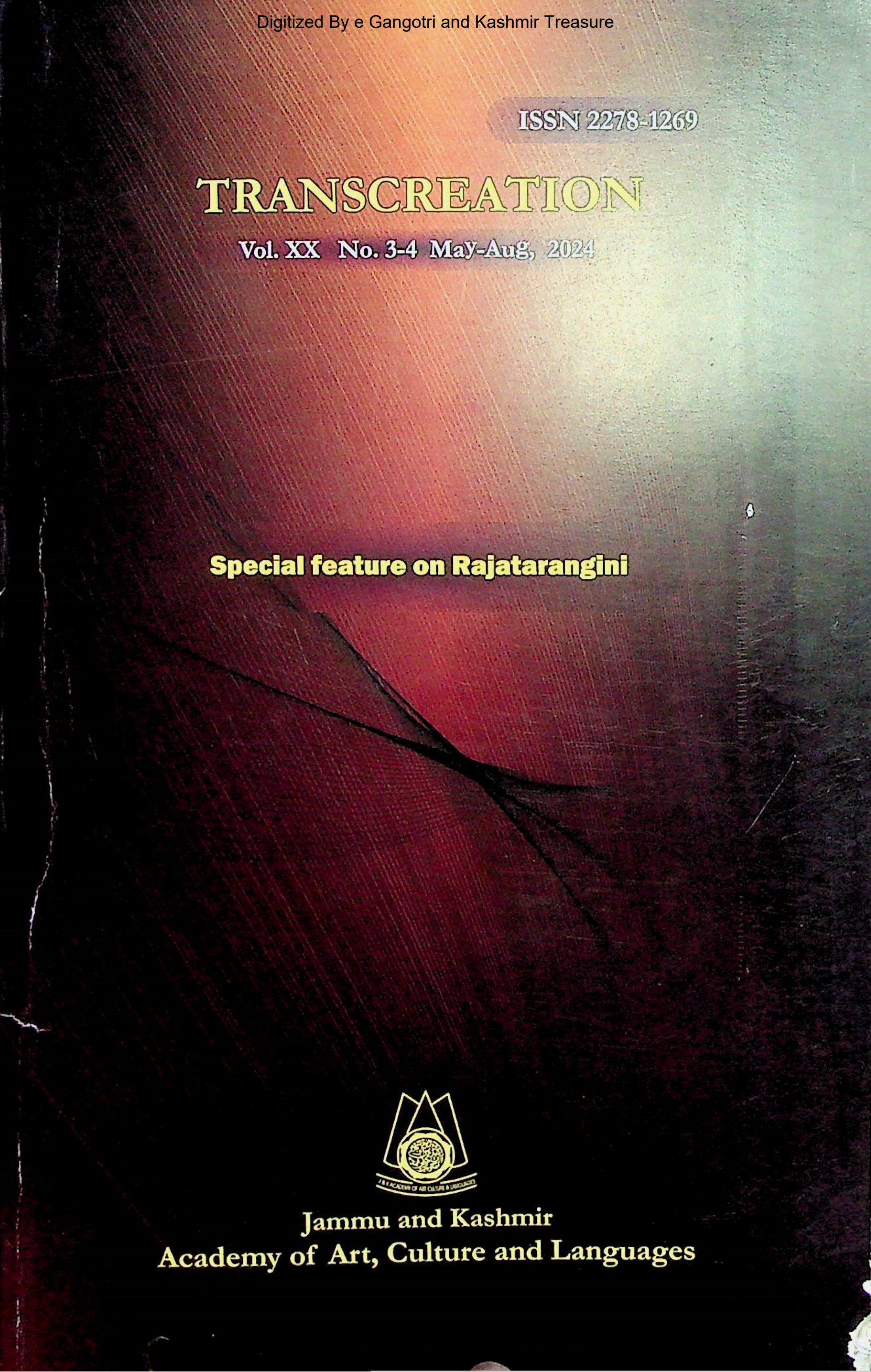

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CONTENTS

Special feature on *Rajatarangini*

EDITORIAL V

1 KALHANA Excerpted 7

2 SITUATING KALHANA AND HIS *RAJATARANGINI*

Prof Rattan Lal Hangloo 16

3 INTRODUCING KALHANA AND HIS *RAJATARANGINI*

Dr Madhvi Yasin 48

4 KALHANA'S RAJATARANGINI

Prof Shafi Shauq 57

5 THE AFTERLIVES OF KALHANA'S *RAJATARANGINI*

Prof Chitralekha Zutshi 63

6 KALHANA: AN ILLUSTRIOUS HISTORIAN OF KASHMIR

Prof Farooq Fayaz 72

7 REVISITING THE *RAJATANRAGINI*
R L Bhat 80

8 THE HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE OF *RAJATARANGINI*
Ghulam Nabi Atash 93

9 DĀRVA-ABHISĀRAAND RĀJATARAŊGINĪ
A Study in Place Names By Lalit Gupta 100

10 POET IN FOCUS – PROF SHASHI PATHANIA
Suman K Sharma 119

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EDITORIAL

Kashmir's historical evolution is unique insofar as it possesses one of the oldest recorded chronicles in the whole sub-continent. Kashmir's historical and cultural evolution was put into writing very early in its history, thereby providing it with an advantage over some regions in the sub-continent.

The *Nilmata Purana* is the earliest extant record of Kashmir's creation myths, religious traditions, mythical lore, cultural practices, customs, rituals, etc. The Purana was not a historical text in the technical sense but is very important for its archival and antiquarian value. It was followed by a long gap upto the composition of the *Rajatarangini* (The River of Kings), a twelfth-century historical chronicle that continues to be relevant for a number of reasons.

Rajatarangini is the story of the ancient kings of Kashmir which chronicles the ups and downs of their kingdoms, their failings and feats, the battles won and lost, the borders expanded and contracted. Apparently a pure legendary and historical chronicle, the *Rajatarangini* has always stood for more than what it has been historically perceived to be.

The text of the *Rajatarangini* may not be as authentic as historical sources are usually thought to be, but it laid the foundations of the future historical studies that paved the way for looking into Kashmir's ancient history from an academic and scholarly perspective.

Composed during a tumultuous period in Kashmir's history, the *Rajatarangini* sets out for the first time to provide a linear and continuous narrative to Kashmir's broken and troubled phases in order to make sense of its long, sustained and gradual evolution.

Written in chaste and scholarly Sanskrit, the *Rajatarangini* has withstood the vagaries of time and continues to be evaluated for reasons other than being a historical narrative. It is highly esteemed for its literary merit, inimitable stylistic qualities, literary devices, apart from being one of the ancient sources of Kashmir history.

Besides, it is an index of its contemporary cultural practices, demographic profile of the Kashmiri population and their professional pursuits. It is also valued for giving an outline of the social stratification and caste divisions of Kashmiri society in medieval times and providing an outline of the internal and external dimensions of Kashmir polity in medieval times as also the systems of governance in Kashmir and in its neighbouring areas under various rulers.

In recent times, the *Rajatarangini* has garnered a renewed interest in view of its antiquarian character and is rigorously being studied and analysed by scholars and commoners alike. The need is to go back to the basics to explore our history in totality. It is expected that the present collection of papers by experts on the subject will help scholars, students and other interested persons alike to study such historical classics in the right perspective.

(Dr) Abid Ahmad

KALHANA

Kalhana was probably the son of Canpaka, the great Kashmirian Minister under Harsha. Born of a prosperous family he took to learning. Brahmin by caste and worshipper of Saiva cult, he still admired Buddhism. The chronicle he has bequeathed to us is written in verse. The introduction was attempted in 1148-49 or Saka 1070 and the work was completed in the year following. The writings of Suvrata, Kshemendra Padmamihara, Nilmatta, Halaraja and Chavilakara must have proved of immense help to him for information about early times.[1] Kalhana says, "Kashmir may be conquered by the force of spiritual merits but not by force of soldiers" and it has proved correct.

It may be that Kalhana has sometimes suppressed and sometimes exaggerated things but his delineation of events suffers nowhere from dereliction.

It may be proudly said that while India was poor at history at one time it is Kashmir that gave a lead. Many a scholar has received inspiration from Kalhana from time to time. He cannot distinguish between the legendary and genuine elements of tradition.

The great historian flourished in the twelfth century when Jayasinha was the ruler of Kashmir.

Rajtarangini, his memorable work, will ever continue to be a source of great interest to the world's historians. This book is unique in the literatures of the world.

Kalhana's task was continued by other scholars. Jonaraja Rajavali wrote *Rajtarangini* upto 1459, Shrivara upto 1486, Prajabhatta upto 1512, Shaka upto 1596.

Rajtarangini was translated into Persian in the time of Zain-ul-Abidin and Akbar. Stein's English translation appeared in 1892-1904.

Kalhana's life-time coincides with one of the most turbulent periods in Kashmir's political history. Events affecting the destinies of ruling dynasties and the welfare of the people happened in quicker succession. Had it not been for Kalhana's chronicle we should have known very little about them. King Harsha (1089 to 1101 A.D.) by his own ill-tempered and ill-conceived actions, let loose a stream of tragic events, resulting in untold suffering and confusion. A luxurious court maintained out of all proportions to the financial resources of his government compelled him to impose heavy fiscal exactions and appropriate the assets of the landed aristocracy as well as some religious institutions. These events had their inevitable reactions. Kalhana's picturesque narrative shows how profoundly these influenced his entire outlook on society and contemporary affairs. His descriptions mirror his own personality.

The high position which Kalhana's family occupied apparently gave him the necessary scope for intimate personal contacts with the leading men of his own time. While he maintains a studied reticence about himself, he tries to view the world around him, so troubled and confused, with an observant eye and an open mind which are essential for a chronicler. His insight into human nature is penetrating and his intimate acquaintance with his country's geography and material conditions seems to be surprisingly accurate for a poet. He portrays the men and events of his time not only in their individual manifestations but in their social and historical settings. The kings, the nobles, the priests, the merchants and the general mass of people, all receive their due share of comment at his hands. His analysis of social factors that influenced the political events of his time appears to be very accurate indeed.

The Damaras, as the landed aristocracy of Kashmir were known in those days, constituted a powerful political factor. King Harsha had decided to suppress them. There was a complicated network of intrigues and counter-intrigues aimed at political supremacy for which Kalhana shows the utmost disgust. This state of affairs eventually led to the armed rebellion of the persecuted and disgruntled nobles who, under the leadership of two brothers, Uccala and Sussala of the royal family, succeeded in deposing the king, later assassinated. The rise of the Damaras to power made political confusion worse confounded. Intrigues between rival groups persisted and armed revolt by several pretenders to the throne rendered Kashmir's politics most confusing. Kalhana narrates these events with visible pain and disgust. The violent deposition of Harsha had its repercussions on the fortunes of Kalhana's family. Canpaka never entered politics again. He lived for more than thirty years after his retirement from public life. Kalhana appears to have been young at the time. But being very independent and sensitive, he never aspired for any office under any of the rulers. He was too proud to stoop for favours. When he began to write his Chronicle (1148-49 A.D.), Jayasinha, the son of usurper Sussala, was ruling; Kalhana did not conceal his contempt for Jayasinha's character. He denounces Sussala's wanton cruelties and avarice, but howers high praise on the valour and heroism of Bhikshachara, a pretender whose political ambitions, however, he does not hesitate to condemn.

Kalhana's remarks about the character of his country men are such as only a man endowed with a keen, observant and critical eye, could make. He shows positive aversion for the Damaras as a class. He calls them 'robbers.' Though son of a high and respected official, he shows no enthusiasm for that class. He speaks of their degrading vices with evident relish. Although proud of his birth as a Brahmin, he had an undisguised contempt for the Purohits or priestly class who, we understand, had organised themselves into Parishads or associations at all important centres of pilgrimage. Their ignorance, arrogance and baneful interference in the affairs of the State are portrayed by Kalhana with a biting satire sprinkled frequently with humour and criticism. He testifies to the peace-loving nature of the citizen, who during all these turbulent years, appear to have remained calm and serene.

We know Kalhana only by the *Rajtarangini.* Of his other literary achievements we know very little. He lived at a time when Hindu religion and culture assumed a highly conventional form. Classes and castes had long been crystallized. Political institutions bore the stamp of a feudal monarchy dominated by interested social groups. The citizens at large lived their normal life, practically unruffled by political events. Kalhana's own education and upbringing, therefore, could not have been anything but conventional. But he always maintained detached and impartial outlook while delineating the men and institutions of his time. His approach was essentially human. The fact that at no time did he aspire for the patronage of any king or class enabled him to maintain a robust individualism. His painstaking scholarship and love for detail helped him to bequeath to posterity an invaluable historical document of rare literary merit. About his own narrative Kalhana says: "Though in view of the length of the narrative, diversity could not be secured by means of amplifications, still there may be found in it something that will please the right-minded."

RAJTARANGINI

"Now the present period of Vaivasvata Manu had come, the Prajapati Kasyapa induced the gods Druhina, Upendra, Rudra and others to descend and having caused Jalodbhava who resided in it to be slain, founded upon the site of the lake, the kingdom of Kashmir.

"It is the territory which he under the protection of Nila, supreme lord of all the Nagas, whose parasol is the swelling Nila Kunda with the following waters of the Vitasta for its staff.

"Where Parvati who adores Guha and whose copious milk is drunk by the elephant-faced Ganesa although she has converted herself into the Vitasta, which turns her face towards lowlying lands and whose abundant waters are drunk in mouthfuls by the Nagas, does not abandon her natural impulse.

"It is the resort of the Nagas, prominent among whom where Sankha and Padma, like the city of the Giver of Wealth of the guardians of treasure.

> "It has, forsooth, stretched forth on their back its arms in the guise of its mountain ramparts for the safeguarding of the Nagas who had approached from terror of Garuda.

"Where within the sanctuary of Papasudana those who touch the husband of Uma in wooden form secure for reward the pleasure of life and liberation.

"Where on a waterless hill the goddess of Twilight is in possession of water which is the ocular demonstration of the presence of piety and the absence of sin.

"Where the self-originating Fire emerging from the womb of the Earth accepts with many arms of flame the votive offering of the sacrifices.

"Where the goddess Saraswati herself may be seen in the form of a swan in a lake on the peak of the Bheda mountain which is hallowed by the rise of the Ganga.

"Where in the shrine the residence of Siva at Nandikestra are to be seen to this day the drops of the votive sandal emollient offered by the celestials.

"In the country adorned by Chakrabhat, Vijayesa, dikesava and Isana there is not even so much land as can be covered by a sesame seed which is profane.

"Such is Kashmir, the country which may be conquered by the force of spiritual merit but not by armed force; where the inhabitants in consequence fear more the next world; where there are not baths in winter, comfortable landing places on the river-banks, where the rivers being free from aquatic animals are without peril, where realizing that the land created by his father is unable to bear heat the hot-rayed sun honours it by bearing himself with softness even in summer. Learning, high dwelling house, saffron, iced water, grapes and the like what is a common place there is difficult to secure in paradise.

It is a history and it is a poem, though the two perhaps go ill together. Written eight hundred years ago, the story is supposed to cover thousands of years but the early part is brief and vague and sometimes fanciful and it is only in the later periods, approaching Kalhana's own times, that we see a close-up and have a detailed account. It is a story of mediaeval times and often enough it is not and murder and treason and civil war and tyranny. It is the story of autocracy and military oligarchy here as in Byzantium or elsewhere. In the main, it is a story of the kings and the royal families and the nobility, not of the common folk - indeed the very name is the 'River of Kings.

And yet Kalhana's book is something far more than a record of king's doings. It is a rich store-house of information, political, social and to some extent, economic. We see the panoply of the middle-ages, the feudal knights in glittering armour, quixotic chivalry and disgusting cruelty, loyalty unto death and senseless treachery; we read of royal armours and intrigues and of fighting and militant and adulterous queens. Women seem to play quite an important part, not only behind the scenes but in the councils and the field as leaders and soldiers. Sometimes we get intimate glimpses of human relations and human feelings, of love and hatred, of faith and passion. We read of Suyya's great engineering feats and irrigation works; of Lalitadiya's distant wars of conquest in far countries; of Meghavahana's curious attempt to spread non-violence also by conquests; of the building of temples and monasteries and their destruction by unbelievers and iconoclasts who confiscated the temple treasures. And then there were famines and floods and great fires which decimated the population and reduced the survivors to misery.

It was a time when the old economic system was decaying; the old order was changing in Kashmir as it was in the rest of India. Kashmir had been meeting ground of different cultures of Asia, the western Greco-Roman and Iranian and the eastern Mongolian, but essentially it was a part of India and the inheritor of Indo-Aryan traditions. And as the economic structure collapsed it shook up the old Indo-Aryan polity and weakened it and made it an easy prey to internal commotion and foreign conquest. Flashes of old Indo-Aryan ideals come out, but they are already out of date under the changing conditions. War- lords march up and down and make havoc of the people. Popular risings take place. Kalhana describes Kashmir as a country which delighted in insurrection, and they are exploited by military leaders and adventurers to their own advantage. We reach the end of that period of decay which ultimately ushered in the Muslim conquest of India. Yet Kashmir was strong enough, because of its mountain fastnesses, to withstand and repulse Mahmood of Ghazni, the great conqueror who made habit of raiding India to fill his coffers and built up an empire in Central Asia. It was nearly two hundred years after Kalhana wrote his history that Kashmir submitted to Muslim rule, and even then it was not by external conquest, but by a local revolution headed by a Muslim official of the last Hindu ruler Queen Kota."

Endnote

[1] Unfortunately their works are unavailable at present probably because the Rajtarangini supplanted them. But as Kalhana has given up their version in several places it would have been most useful for us to see what their version was and how far that version corresponded with other facts and with modern views. However, regret is of no avail. Stein who has studied the work most

carefully opines that Kalhana's history is reliable. Kalhana says that he has got his statement verified by grants, inscriptions and other records. We may, therefore, safely follow him assisted by Huien Tsang, Chhachanama and such historical data as may elsewhere be available. The study made by R. S. Pandit in his memorable book is also a useful guidance to - "River of Kings."

(Reproduced from R. S. Pandit's translated *Rajtarangini.*)

SITUATING KALHANA AND HIS *RAJATARANGIN*

Prof Rattan Lal Hangloo

History is re-written in every age but historians have to guard not only against the prejudices of the past but also of the future, otherwise their work would be untranslatable in troubled times. This paper has grown out of my own interest in Kalhana's Rajatarangini which has not received adequate attention in Indian historiography. Kalhana is one of the foremost historians of early Kashmir and one of the most original scholars in this field anywhere in the world. His method, however, does not only fit the familiar moulds of social, economic, political and cultural history but his writing also corresponds to our history of ideas and overlaps with what has recently become known as the history of mentalities. In this paper I am not concerned with the details of looting of Kashmir by Damaras or with the abilities of kings such as Lalitaditya as illustrated by Kalhana. I am trying to indicate the necessity of interpreting Rajatarangini as a source text incorporating the evidence of a personal standpoint, which has acquired a lasting significance from the individuality of the author, uniqueness of the historical situation and specificity of the region and time. The principal subject of my account is not the historical reality of events and state of affairs recorded by Rajatarangini; what appeals to me more is the reality of the mental activity manifested in this chronicle which also shows how Kalhana's account of complex social, economic and political processes and patterns in Kashmir interacted with the wider world.

> Kalhana did not recognize the historian or chronicler as a separate class of learned men. He looked upon himself not as a historian but as a poet (kavi) and his work is primarily a poem (kavya). Only the poet can bring back the past and display it before the eyes of men, for with his mind's eye he sees existences which he reveals to others by divine intuition. The writing of history is thus for Kalhana, subject to the same inspiration as poetry and Clio is one with Calliope. -A.L. Basham

Aptly encapsulating the content of the Rajatarangini, the above quote accurately summarizes the multiple strands in Kalhana's historical work and also points out that there can be no finality in the reading of the Rajatarangini as a unitary narrative since there are many layers of opinions, influences and perceptions encoded within this text that can be meaningfully understood only when we understand Kalhana's mind and read his work in its larger context.

To develop a clear and critical understanding of Kalhana and his work would certainly require the writing of a voluminous tract. This essay is only a small exercise in this direction to interpret Kalhana in a wider context that is invariably linked to the historical process in Kashmir and by extension Central Asia and other neighbouring regions.

I. Kalhana's sources and approach

In Kashmir the tradition of history writing goes back to early times.There were a number of scholars and priests who wrote Prasastis of inscriptions, biographical works, Kavyas,Mahatimayas, Puranas, Caritas such as Harsacarita by Banabhatta and Vikramankadevacarita by Bilhana, sasnas or ordinances, sastra or written records and other narratives about Kashmir before and during the period of Kalhana but none of them can match Kalhana's historical vision and historiographical power in understanding and interpreting events.Kalhana's range is extraordinary in terms of subject-matter and the treatment is also varied; this reveals an attempt to look at the phenomena according to their internal logic, though he is critical of many actors.

Kalhana was the son of Canpaka of Parihaspura, a Duarapati (the keeper of the gate) during the reign of King Harsha (A.D.1089-1101). Canpaka lived long after the death of his patron, Harsha, but ceased to take an active part in politics. Kalhana's uncle had a close association with Harsha who rewarded his compliance in taking singing lessons from the music loving king by presenting him with a lakh of gold coins. This placed Kalhana in a unique position whereby he could gain precious insight into the workings of the palace and the many interests that converged there temporarily while being situated at a considerable distance from same. He completed the Karya (poem) Rajatarangini in the year A.D.1148-49.

From the beginning to the end Kalhana has organized the entire text of the chronicle (Rajatarangini) into eight books which deal with varied disciplines from religion to politics, history, literature, geography, economy, society, folk and popular culture and material culture. While he does not contribute to the nature of science and technology as such, we find that in *Rajatarangini* there is very scanty but useful information on the history of science of that period as well.

Apart from myths, legends and popular traditions, Kalhana consulted written texts, inscriptions, *Nilmata Purana*, Ksemendra's

Nrpavali, and Helaraja's Parthivavali, He probably used some of these works as he disclaims this sort of work as worthy of him and insists on covering the whole history of Kashmir even if his sources were not supporting him for the earlier period. He was also witness to many interesting developments that took place during his age. He acknowledged the fragmentary compositions of Padmamihira, Chavillakara and Suvratan among his sources of information.

It is noteworthy that he has judiciously organized these fragments of information into a cohesive narrative thus giving a nuanced reading of the earlier society and also the contemporary society. He used more original sources to check his literary authorities. He also studied coins and inspected buildings, as he was clearly a master of topography of the valley. Besides, he used freely local traditions of all kinds and family records, while from his own knowledge and from that of his father and many others he culled the minute details which marked his treatment of the events of fifty years preceding his work.

While studying Kalhana, Basham says that he made full use of tradition, whether written or verbal, and the earlier books of his chronicle are evidently almost entirely based on such tradition. Basham also acknowledges that in handling of the tradition, Kalhana is not wholly uncritical because Kalhana, while making use of traditions, also evaluated various traditions regarding a particular event. His description about the death of King Lalitaditya (A.D. 769) and King Yasaskara (A.D.948) stand out as the best examples.

However, compared to his predecessors and contemporaries, the impact of Kalhana's style and ideas on history writing has been very profound, particularly from Harsha's period (A.D.1089-1101). Part of the profundity of his work came from his determination to look behind the traditional intellectual viewpoints that dominate his earlier books and beyond the accepted boundaries to the very essence of human life and activity in society.

In his assessment of Kalhana, Keith says: His (Kalhana's) description of incidents in recent history appears to achieve a high standard of accuracy and is filled with those small touches which imply personal knowledge or acceptance of the testimony of eye witnesses, as when he recounts the details of the self-immolation of Suryamati or of Sussala's murder. The popular sayings and anecdotes which he records bear the stamp of being taken from life. Excellent also is his delineation of character and the change of manner from the earlier to that of the later books is significant. The former give but the typical poetical description of heroes such as Tunjana and Praversena, the latter present vivid personalities such as Tunjana, Ananta, Harsha and Sussala; there is nothing like this in Bana, Padmagupta or Bilhana. In the minor figures, his humour, sometimes Rabelaisian, has full play, as in his picture of his contemporary Kularaja, whose abilities had raised him from the rank of a bravo to that of a city prefect. His accuracy in genealogical information is conspicuous, and his topography most favourably distinguishes him from such a historian as Livy, who apparently never looked at one of the battlefields he described.

Bearing in mind the wide canvas that Kalhana has painted and the nature of his selection, it seems he was archetypal of the 12 century on stylistic grounds. This seems more remarkable because before Kalhana, the craft of history writing was not very well developed in Kashmir and the rest of India." Kalhana says, "This narrative of mine which is properly arranged resembles a medicine which is useful where the accounts regarding place and time of kings are fluctuating. No doubt his chronology for the earlier period of Kashmir's history is totally unreliable but, as

Keith justifies it rightly, this was not invented by him but he took it over without questioning "its flagrant absurdities and its ludicrously long reigns.

He has for an earlier period confused and mixed up the issues. For example, while examining the King Toramana period, Kalhana has placed the father much earlier than the son and his description does not fit in with the general trend of events that occurred in the history of northern India during the period to which he refers. As a result his account does not enjoy much credence and reliance for the earlier period.

He also seems to have paid serious attention to epics as we find him referring to Mahabharata and Ramayana very frequently. He studied Varahmihira's Brahatsamhita. However, a refreshing feature of his work that distances it from other works is his clarity of mind which is evident in the organization of his materials on varied aspects and makes his presentation more explicitly systematic.

Buddha Prakash appreciates Kalhana's scientificity as an essential dimension of his methodology and inexhaustible newness of his expression. He says, "In secular and court literature, there are some interesting chronicles such as the Harsacharita of Banabhatta, the Vicramanka- devacharita of Bilhana, the Navsahasankacarita of Padmagupta, the Kumara-pala charitas of Jaya Singh and Hemchandra, the Ramacharita of Sandhyakara Nandin, the Gauda-vaho of Vakpati and Prithvirjaya- vijaya of an anonymous writer. These works are full of epic adulation, colourful descriptions and courtly exaggeration. They do refer to important events but they clothe them in poetic vestures so as to deprive them of their historical character. Only the Rajatarangini of Kalhana is a notable and solitary exception. In it the author follows the critical and analytical method which covers the first stage of the study of history... He pleads for the dispassionate investigation of facts and follows a scientific method of historical criticism."

But Keith offers a different viewpoint. He says that since Harsha's death marginalized Canpaka in local politics, this cut off young Kalhana from the possibility of ministerial office and political life, and therefore Kalhana must have conceived the idea of rewriting the chronicles of Kashmir. Kalhana's aim was to produce a work which, according to Keith, would conform to the demands of rhetoricians - of whom India had none - of writers on poetics and at the same time to impress on his readers moral maxims.

According to S. C. Ray, Kalhana wanted to write Rajatarangini, the Chronicle of Kings of Kashmir, because he was the court poet of King Jayasimha (A.D. 1128-49). In his commentary on Srikanthacarita, Jonaraja (the author of Zaina Rajatarangini (A.D. 1420-1470) said that Kalhana was commissioned to write the history of Kashmir by his patron Alkadatta, the Minister for War and Peace (Sandhivigrahaka) and King Jayasimha. But there is no evidence to support this view of S. C. Ray and Jonaraja nor does Kalhana or any of his contemporaries acknowledge that he was patronized by any king or his minister.

However, it is a well established fact that Kalhana studied some of the great poems such as Raghuvamsha and Meghaduta of Kalidasa and Harshacharitra of Bana. In fact, Mankha tells us that Kalhana's style had become so polished that it could reflect, as though in a mirror, the whole perfection of Bilhana's muse. Kalhana acknowledged his position as a poet at the very outset when he says: "Worthy of praise is the strange power of true poets which surpasses in value even the drink of immortality, since by it not only their own bodies of glory, but also those of others, are sustained. It is the creative genius of the poet alone which by its power of production of beauty can place past times before the eye of men."

Kalhana was essentially a poet and does not claim the status of a scientific investigator but his organization of materials in Gottschalk's words entitles him to a position among historians. The processes of selection, arrangement, narration and critical method are defined by him as essential elements of history writing R. C. Majumdar observed that this is the only work in ancient Indian literature that may be regarded as an historical text in the true sense of the word. The author has not only taken great pains to collect his material from the existing chronicles and other sources but, at the beginning of his work, he has set down a few general principles for writing history which are remarkably far in advance of his age. Indeed these may be regarded as anticipating, to a large extent, the critical method of historical research which was not fully developed until the 19th century.

History writing at the hands of Kalhana emerged as a result of the changing state-societal structures as a substantive entity that became the source for him to compose Rajatarangini (River of Kings). It is the complexity of these structural changes which underlines the philosophical basis of the historiographical development in the middle of the 12th century that was promptly assimilated by the succeeding chroniclers in Kashmir's history, though not with as much objectivity and meticulousness as displayed by Kalhana in the later portions of his work.

However, the fact remains that this period has become a reference point in subsequent debates and hence needs large-scale investigation as the institutions of the State and society were getting transformed, reorganized and modeled on new patterns. These changes were also affecting the attitude of people at different levels in Kashmiri society. Therefore Kalhana, through his medium of poetry, Kavya, reproduced the society of his period and also of the earlier period. But while indulging in this social production he went beyond the immaterial phenomenon and sensibly considered it to be irrelevant for the sort of investigation he had undertaken, unlike other poets of his age. It is his commitment to derive the details for his Kavya as much from reality as possible that entitles him to whatever worth he enjoys as a historian.

He is very consciously expecting poets to be more methodical and objective. He says: "That noble minded (poet) is alone worthy of praise whose word, like that of a judge, keeps free from love or hatred in relating the facts of the past." Before Kalhana, Kashmiris had a long tradition of literary productions in the shape of sutras, Puranas Mahatmyas, etc. Kalhana also seems to have borrowed immensely from his predecessors such as Mammata and the author of Nilmata Purana.

Interestingly, one finds that the Arab philologists also evolved a critical approach by studying poetry and attempted to separate genuine from forged poetry. They introduced a method of internal criticism side by side with that of external criticism of the authorities by collecting and sifting historical data. This method of writing was, however, similar to that of Akhbaris. In Arab historiography it is stated that in the 3/4 century A.H. Ibn Qutayba was so critical of his sources that he went to the Old Testament to check what Wahab b. Munabah was taking was well established in his sources. Similarly, Al Yaqubi was critical of his sources, especially for pre-Islam, when he scrutinized his authorities for the Islamic period.

Through their works Akhbaris, philologists and genealogists set the scope of historical studies and ranged over its whole field. By the 3rd century A.H., a new conception of history writing was emerging and efforts were made to extend this new outlook to other countries by genealogists and philologists. Keeping in view these developments and Kashmir's contacts with the wider world of Central Asia and Arabs, it was most unlikely that such an approach was not available in Kashmir when Kalhana wrote more than two centuries later than these Arab and Persian scholars.

Persians also reinforced it by imitating early Arab historiographers. In Arab poetry, religious sentiment played little part and instead there were ideals of manliness and a strong belief in fate - not to surrender to it but an acceptance of the unpredictable and inevitable. Besides this frankness and directness, which was very unrestrained in Arab poetry, one also finds that in Kalhana.

From place to place the poetry was transmitted from generation to generation by oral tradition which was chanted publicly throughout. Even the Pahalvi influences, which overwhelmed many aspects of Kashmir's culture, had also been seriously influenced by Arab culture. For example, when Persian was written by Muslims by the end of the high Caliphate period, it was being written not as Pahalvi but in a new form, expressed in Arab characters and incidentally reflecting such changes in pronunciation and grammar as had supervened in the spoken tongue since the standardization of literary Pahalvi, especially in Khurasan. This was followed by a period when epic poems were produced and a kind of new renaissance took place. In the early 10th century, Rudaqi Samani appeared and became the first important poet in new Islamic Persian language. In 980 A.D. the poet Daqiqi died. The Samani poet left behind Shah-namah which Firdausi incorporated in his version. Around 1020 A.D. Al-Firdausi left the epic poem Shahnama. Around 1030 A.D., Al-Unsuri, a panegyrist at the court of Mahmud of Gazni, died. His Arabic style of poetry played a significant role in further strengthening the poetic and literary traditions in Persia. In

A.D.1049 (exactly 100 years before Kalhana wrote) Abu said Abi l-Khyr, a Sufi poet, died leaving behind his rich Rubaiyat. In 1060 A.D. Nasir-e-Khusraw Ismaili left behind his Qasidas. In A.D.1092 Nizam-ul-Mulk, composer of Siyaset-namah, passed away, and in A.D.1122 the great Umar Khayyam, mathematician and writer of great quatrains, passed away. In tune with these developments, Kalhana also exercised his poetical talent of a very high order to make his work attractive. Like his Arab and Persian counterparts, he believed that his work must be a work of art.

It was most likely that there was a lot of give and take between the Kashmiri and Central Asian literary traditions as this was the time when contacts between Central Asia and Kashmir were very well established. Turks were serving as soldiers in the armies of Kashmiri kings like Lalitaditya and Harsha. King Lalitaditya felt threatened by the Arabs and requested help from the Chinese emperor against the Arabs.

A large number of Turks came and brought with them Persian and Arab literary influences because the Turks got converted from Shamanism to Buddhism and then to Islam and with that came the study of two major Islamic tongues, Arab and Persian. So the Persians exercised a dominant influence on Turks and under Seljuk administration and patronage, the Persian language and culture extended across Anatolia, India and Central Asia. Kashmir, being an ancient centre of learning and situated on the silk route, was bound to contribute, respond to and benefit more from all these influences.

Interestingly, this was the time (between the 9th to 11th centuries) when general history writing evolved in the Arab, Persian or Islamic world. The Al-Yaqubis Tarikh, Al-Dinawari's Akhbar al-Tiwal and Al-Tabari's Tarikh al-Rasulu al-Mulk made their appearance and impact. A remarkable feature of these works is very similar to that of Kalhana, like (a) the wide range of evidence and (b) the critical approach specific to their age.

During this period, not only the poetry but also the historical writing were very popular in a variety of ways which illustrate several perspectives. "For instance, the stories of the battle days of the Arabs commonly joined with bits of poetry referring to the event. These had been preserved in oral tradition, written down and entered into the mental world of the adib as much in connection with poetry as with history proper.....several ways of studying history were represented in the careful work of Al-Baladuri who studied Muslim history from a more secular viewpoint than his younger contemporary, Tabari. In their works we find that they did not represent continuity in terms of chronology but more in preserving it in genealogy which has been the marked feature for earlier portions of Rajatarangini.

Keith says: "We are in a normal world when we find Kalhana concerned to prove to us that evil deeds meet retribution, by an enumeration of cases in which avarice of kings resulted in the alienation of their subjects, though as a true Brahmin he admits that the use made of evil gains may sanctify the means, as when they are bestowed on the Brahmins.

Not only to Keith but to many other scholars as well, such views of Kalhana may seem little short of nonsense but one should not approach Kalhana from the methodological parameters of our own times. It is true that Kalhana does not appear to be a great scientific investigator in an age that was dominated by fatalism. There are certain issues which Kalhana does not explain with reason and many times he has failed to seek rational explanation of human actions by merely stressing that the deeds of men are the outcome of his unknown past. He blames fate for ingratitude shown by the recipient of the royal power. According to him, it is fate which demotivated King Harsha (A.D.1089-1101) from practicing wise policies in the kingdom. This kind of conflict between the ideas of predestination and freewill was also a typical feature of the Akhbaris in Iraqi schools of historiography in the 9th century.

Reality is complex and many-sided and no source in Kalhana's age would have allowed the original multiplicity to be recreated. Therefore, he made implicit and explicit judgments because to him the purpose of history demanded the documentation of his understanding of the past. The focus of his choice was politics and the documentation of political struggles for power in which many important matters, including the lives of ordinary people, were given less attention except in times of crisis generated by the working of political conflicts whether between the State and Damaras or other contending parties seeking power. But nowhere does he seem to have fallen to the level of sheer partisanship and does not represent one view only and that is the discipline imposed by his scholarly judgement.

Besides, we need to acknowledge the fact that Kalhana did not have any materials up to the 9th century A.D. to reconstruct the past history of Kashmir. His temptation to portray the continuity of his narrative not only fractured his style as a historian, but also allowed the chronological absurdities to overwhelm his authenticity Kalhana was conscious of this fact. S. P. Pandit observes: "Probably Kalhana himself did not expect or even desire that the same credence should be given to the whole of his narrative in all its details in the first three Tarangas (chapters) which he expected as of right in favour of dates and events of subsequent, and especially the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth Tarangas. He clearly indicates now and then, that as we go back towards antiquity the story becomes more and more traditional and then even legendary, and that as you approach modern times it assumes a truly historical character with as correct details as you can expect in a work of this kind based upon materials like those which were available to him.

Whatever problems Kalhana may have confronted, he did not lack scholarly equipment and independence of mind, even though his account is also at times replete with material which is intent upon promoting enough indiscretion to offend those in power. Here he makes a judicious distinction between personalities and the institutional base taking care to portray or rehabilitate certain personalities in their institutional context and is seen clearly where he talks of the king and Damaras (a dominant section in Kashmiri society during his period), not as two political actors but more than that, as representatives of two interests that are reflected in institutional flux where hegemonic and local interests contest for power and spill over into various institutions like the temples, etc.

Another example culled out from the Rajatarangini is about the kind of treatment meted out to King Jayasimha (A.D. 1128-1149). It is quite contrary to the general attitude adopted by the court poets or chroniclers in ancient or medieval India, particularly the ones who extolled their patrons beyond imagination. Scornfully, Kalhana disapproves of the conduct of King Jayasimha (A.D. 1128-1149) in connection with the intrigues of Sujji, his minister. Let me cite some more examples to amplify this. Kalhana says: "By the rulers' mere inability to discriminate between their servants there falls, alas, a thunderbolt on the innocent land. Look how the subjects are ruined in their helplessness by a rogue minister, while the King, imperturbable in his kindness to him, pays no regard to them. What other king would act firmly on his own judgment if this King is made to dance like a child pulled out by rogues. Or is it perhaps the dullness imparted in early youth by an entourage chiefly composed of fools, does not pass away even in mature age just as the flaw does not pass away from the precious stone.

This aspect of Kalhana has been examined by Keith very appropriately when he says: "Kalhana's detachment enabled him to envisage dispassionately the demerits of his own countrymen and his testimony is abundantly confirmed by history. In fact, Kalhana was reflecting on the general understanding of history in his age when he stated: "What man of culture is there to whose heart such a connected narrative dealing with innumerable incidents of the remote paste will not appeal." With his habitual meticulousness, extensive knowledge of affairs and exemplary intellectual honesty, Kalhana compares carefully to show us Kashmir's royalty as seen through a variety of his depictions. While praising the valour and victories of King Lalitaditya (A.D. 724- 761), he does not lose sight of the mediocrity of the king that led him to burn the town of Parihaspura (Kalhana's home town) and caused hardship to people. Similarly, he exposes King Harsha's (A.D.1089-1101) cruel behaviour even though Harsha was his father's patron.

In view of this attitude of Kalhana towards those in power, it is very difficult to believe that he occupied any position at the court of King Jayasimha (A.D. 1128- 1149) or was patronized by any minister for composing Rajatarangini. In the complex power play reminiscent of medieval times where individuals were made pawns, Kalhana's own near kin became victims of this power politics in Kashmir, and not only did they lose patronage and fall from grace but his uncle Kanka eventually became self- exiled from his beloved country to far-off Kashi (Benaras).

Going beyond the king and queen variety of history, Kalhana clearly outlined the king makers and other elements whose loyalties were constantly shifting, bordering on mercenary attitudes and hence it is highly improbable that there was any stability which is a pre-condition for patronage. Thus we can surmise that the rapidly shifting context of complex and unstable alliances did not spare anyone and it is these diverse reflections that Kalhana has put into letters which would have been possible without any patronage. The reason is not too far to find as Kalhana is vehemently critical of all interests in society.

Romila Thapar acknowledges this fact when she says: "Kalhana was obviously a man with an analytical mind, which the latter writers were not. He could look upon the situation with the perspective of an outsider, but at the same time retaining the insights of one who is a part of the situation. It is rather to suggest that Kalhana was not a man with a closed mind, and this after all is an essential qualification for a good historian."

Kalhana very clearly states the reasons for writing the chronicle in the following words: "His purpose in writing the chronicle is multiple: to try and establish the true chronology and succession of the Kings of Kashmir, to write a readable narrative on the past, and to provide a commentary on the past which would lead his readers to reflect on the nature and impermanence of life." This statement of Kalhana clearly reflects his philosophy of history because he believed in the reconstruction of the past by critically and scientifically (the analogy to medicine where cause and effect were seen illustrating this point) investigating whatever sources he could acquire. He also believed in developing the interconnections among his facts and in classifying them so that his narrative could throw up a pattern capable of formulating certain principles. Irfan Habib very rightly remarks: "The need for History, or a relatively accurate depiction of man's past, would then only arise, if our interest extended - however slightly or marginally - beyond the urge for a mere justification of the received rights and morals. A departure from fiction, which one controls to an account of the past which one reconstructs, may sometimes incline one to a course of action exactly the opposite of what has been authoritatively prescribed in a society.

It is interesting to see that the two concepts of impermanence and interconnectedness were basic elements in Kashmir's Buddhist philosophy also. But bearing in mind the treatment meted out to Buddhists in Kashmir and the disappearance of Buddhism in Kashmir, how far these elements continued to influence the local literature is not very clear.

Keith believes that in Rajatarangini, "stress is laid on impermanence of power and riches, the transient character of all earthly fame and glory, and the retribution which reaches doers of evil in this or future life, the deeds of kings and ministers are reviewed and censured or commended by the rules of the Dharmasastras or Nitleastra but always with distinct moral bias. In this we certainly see the influence of the Mahabharata in its vast didactic portions and its general tendency to inculcate morality, but we cannot say whether it was original in Kalhana or had already been noted in the works of one or more of his predecessors. Kalhana doubts the credibility of the Suvrata's poems and Ksemendra's Nrpavali and tried to overcome the trouble arising out of the errors and inconsistency in the inscriptional evidence. This makes it amply clear that he did not borrow it from any of his predecessors.

Interestingly, similar parallels can be seen in the idea of impermanence that was applied to history by some individual Greeks, some Stoics and the Pythagoreans while they were making initial efforts to periodize their history. According to them each new world exactly represented the preceding one." According to the Etruscans, each successive race in history has had its great years in which it sprouted, flourished, decayed and died." It also comes very close to what Arnold Toynbee's *Study of History* illustrates in a rather more elaborate manner.

At the very outset in the first book of Rajatarangini, Kalhana very clearly outlines his method. He said: "What is the skill required in order that men of later time should supplement the narrative of events in the works of those who died after composing each of the history of those kings whose contemporaries they were. Hence my endeavour is to give a connected account where the narrative of past events has become fragmentary in many respects." In fact, here one finds the analysis of Kalhana is sometimes very similar to what Marc Bloch has stated in his third chapter of *Historians Craft* while evaluating historical criticism. He admits that it has been many a day since men first took into their heads not to accept all historical evidence blindly. He further emphasized the point that historians for their part have only to "relate" it, as given by their sources, "so that they render history rather as they receive it, than as they evaluate it.""Thus Kalhana offers clarity away from interpolations and overlaps which only serve to confuse and integrate myth and history.

II. Exploring the chronicle

Before we proceed further to analyze the nature of Kalhana's work, let us see how this contribution came to light. The first translation of Kalhana's Rajatarangini was done in Persian at the behest of Sultan Zain-ul- Abidin (A.D.1420-1470) of Kashmir. This version was titled Bahr-ul-Asmar (the sea of tales). When the Emperor incorporated Kashmir into Mughal India, he ordered Abdul Qadir Badauni in A.D. 1594 to complete the translation. Even Abul Fazal summarized it into Ain-i-Akbari and included Kalhana among his sources. During Jahangir's period (A.D.1605-1628), Haidar Malik Chadurah prepared an abridged edition of Rajatarangini in Persian in A.D.1617. In the seventeenth century, when world economy came into existence and British colonial masters began to intrude into remote interiors of India, Kashmir assumed great significance because of its location from where it was easier for the British to facilitate their monopoly over the silk route trade and also to advance their colonial ambition into trans-Himalayan regions." It was in this connection that various European adventurers, spies, administrators, missionaries, travelers visited Kashmir during the colonial period.

In the summer of A.D. 1664, Francois Bernier visited Kashmir in search of the histories of the ancient Kings of Kashmir but ultimately he returned only with Haider Malik Chadura's Persian text which he has referred to in his *Paradise of Indies*. Father Tiefenthaler drew on this abridged summary a century later. After him Gladwin translated *Ain-i-Akbari* of Abul Fazal and made use of Kalhana's Rajatarangini for tracing the early history of Kashmir. Even though Sir William Jones included Sanskrit manuscripts of Kashmir in his scheme of reconstruction of Indian history as he announced in the Asiatic Researches at the beginning of the 19th century, he died before he could lay his hands on the chronicle. In A. D. 1805, Colebrooke obtained a copy of the chronicle while he was in Calcutta but it turned out to be an incomplete version and he published its content in A.D. 1825. Finally, it was H. H. Wilson who first familiarized Europeans with the general nature of only the first six books of Kalhana's Rajatarangini. Before Wilson published his understanding of the chronicle, William Moorcroft tried to obtain the various texts in A. D. 1823. He could only consult the rendering of an incomplete chronicle in the Sharda script and had its Devnagri script prepared. Therefore, it is not surprising to find an unreliable text which he published in 1835 under the auspices of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

The Calcutta edition of 1835 was also used by J. C. Dutt for his translation of the chronicle into English, entitled Kings of Kashmira, this being a translation of the Sanskrit work of

Rajatarangini of Kalhana Pandita which appeared in Calcutta in 1879-1887. Among Indian scholars J. C. Dutt was the first to bring out the translation of the Rajatarangini from Calcutta in A.D.1879-1887 but it was based on the Sharda version of the text of A.D.1835, an edition which was incomplete and full of errors. Calcutta Pandits were unable to follow in many places the details of Kalhana's narrative for want of familiarity with the topography, traditions and other local lore of Kashmir. As a result the text got altered in an unscrupulous manner.

In A. D.1840 A. Troyer, the then Principal of Calcutta Sanskrit College, also attempted to bring out its translation in French with the help of Societe Asiatique Paris but it was a slightly revised version of what Moorcroft attempted earlier and therefore could not leave any impact on scholarship.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Kashmir had passed into the hands of Dogra rulers. One of the British military officers, who visited Kashmir on political duty during that period, was Alexander Cunningham. He succeeded in evolving answers to some of the difficult problems that the chronology of this chronicle posed until then. He made various enquiries locally to provide an exact chronological framework for all the kings from the Karkota period (A. D. 627-948), even though his work was mostly concerned with numismatics but left significant details about various localities which were part of the ancient topography of Kashmir. According to S. N. Dhar, "Throwing light on the era used in Kalhana's chronological accounts, he fixed the dates for almost all kings mentioned in *Rajatarangini* to a fair point of accuracy. Professor Lassan prepared his *Encyclopaedia des Indische Alterthumskunde* in German which also gave details of Kalhana's chronicle but it had nothing special to offer because he had no more reliable materials at his disposal than what was provided by Dr. Wilson and General Cunningham.

In A.D. 1875 and A.D. 1877, George Buhler, who was associated with the Education Department of the Bombay Presidency, visited Kashmir in search of Sanskrit manuscripts. He provided a framework for reconstituting the text of the chronicles. He stressed the necessity of collecting almost all the texts, Puranas, Mahatmyas and other details written before and after Kalhana and the knowledge of Kashmir's geography as an important key for understanding of the chronicle.

He said: "A new attempt to translate and to explain the *Rajatarangini*, and to use its contents for the history of India ought to be made. But it is a work of considerable difficulty, and will require much time and patience. However, before he could attempt to accomplish the task, he left the country in A.D. 1881. His famous report laid down the critical principles for the future historians as to how to use Kalhana's chronicle for the history of Kashmir and the rest of India. Many of the important materials collected by him were finally utilized by Dr. E. Hultzsch for writing articles which appeared in volumes XVIII and XIX of Indian Antiquary in A.D.1885.

The unfinished task of Buhler was finally taken up by M. A. Stein who took great pains and completed the task in October 1879 and published the manuscript in two volumes in 1900. M. A. Stein characterized it as "the codex archetypes of all Kashmiri manuscripts". He attributed its defects to "the numerous mistakes plainly due to faulty transcription from Sharda into Devnagri manuscripts prepared in Kashmir." After examining every minute detail, Stein came to the conclusion that this chronicle was truly a historical record from the Karkota dynasty (A.D. 627- 948) onwards and its authenticity grew during the period of Kalhana. He keenly appreciates the wealth of information that it provided to scholars working on Kashmir and the rest of India. Stein made a number of antiquarian tours of

Kashmir and came up with the codex which had been used by a Kashmiri scholar, Pandit Rajnaka Ratnakanta, around the third quarter of the 17th century. Assisted by Pandit Govind Koul of Srinagar, Stein studied not only the old Sanskrit texts but the specificity of old Kashmiri traditions for comprehending Kalhana's narrative. His Sanskrit text was finally published by the Education Society Press, Bombay in 1892.

It would not be out of place to point out that in their efforts to collate Indian literature, the British relied on the Pandits of Benares and the Maulvis of North India who were the literary elite and thus their opinions left a deep imprint. This exercise was at times affected with defects as the earlier examples had shown, since the British did not engage the services of the literary elite in Kashmir, although there was a thriving literary elite schooled in Sanskrit and Persian and aware of the usages of Sharda." There was no comparative method to read Kalhana's work as the tradition of chronicles was alien to the Pandits of Benares and Bengal, whereas the literary elite in the border regions like Kashmir were familiar with the tradition of historical chronicles and also with the classical Sanskrit texts, and were therefore doubly well placed as they had a comparative understanding of the multiple genres, but their services were underutilized." Historical chronicles were a part of some literary cultures like China, South East and Central Asia but not the Indian sub-continent: the only post-Kalhana exceptions were the regions of North East India such as the Ahom Buranjis of the Ahom, Tripura Buranjis of the Tripuris, Cheitataron Kumpapa of Manipur which resemble the Glass Palace chronicles of Burma and the Chinese royal chronicles. Similarly, in the North West we see the tradition of chronicles in the Central Asian regions of Tocharia, Bactria Persian and Arab, etc., which had large-scale cultural transactions with Kashmir, wider Central Asian and Chinese regions that were part of a greater area of circulation of

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III. Kalhana's concept of history

Although *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana has been used as a reference point in various contexts by a number of scholars and still continues to be, there are only half a dozen articles, including review articles, which have been devoted to examining the nature of the philosophy of history of Kalhana. The Rajatarangini of Kalhana, which is essentially in a sense the articulation of a regional experience, anticipates the flowering of the Kashmiri identity with the rise of state structure. But this identity was plural and open wherein many ethnic groups from parts of India as far as Karnataka, Central Asia and other parts form part of this 'open identity. Today, this is frozen and is read as though there were no mixtures from other regions. That would only contribute to a misreading of Kalhana which was in a sense inaugurated by the Britishers, maybe unconsciously, as they overlooked these significant roots of Kashmiriyat. Therefore, it is all the more necessary to contribute my bit to existing material for drawing a coherent and comparatively faithful picture of Kalhana's ideas.

One of the important features of Kalhana's conception of history is the chronology and classification of various historical events in his chronicle. The first review of this chronicle by E. J. Rapson appeared in 1903 where the reviewer himself was surprised to notice the fineness of notions of chronological accuracy which he found was quite unusual among the Sanskrit scholars of that period. Kalhana not only appears to be conscious of his own times but also capable of appreciating the essential nature of the differences between his own society and those of earlier periods. About the King Godhara he said, "This noble-minded pious king went to heaven after bestowing on Brahmins the Agrahara of

Godhara Hastisala." In the seventh book, while describing the desertion of Harsha's troops, the same Brahmans whose blessings sent kings to heaven are addressed thus: "Those (Brahmans) who are clever in solemn fasts (Prayopavesa), are thoroughly useless in the end. Vain is the reliance which the King put on wretched Brahmans." His appreciation and criticism of Brahmans was always determined by the changing social conditions and it clearly reflected both the elite and the popular mood towards them. When the Brahmans were not powerful, both politically and materially, because their social dominance was being undermined by the new political elite such as Damaras, Ekangas, etc. Kalhana's attitude towards them changes.

However, in 1948 when A. L. Basham studied Kalhana for evaluating Harsha's reign, he frankly admitted Rajatarangini was the "only attempt at true history in the whole of surviving Sanskrit literature." Kalhana seems to have placed Kashmir's history in a comparative perspective reminiscent of the contemporary Kashmiri worldview. He developed a positive and scientific understanding of society that he encountered by giving explanations to events based on human motives like lust, aggrandisement and ambition and human frailty, but at the same time he did not exclude the role of divine retribution. Many times he drew moral lessons from the past.

Of all the writings on Kalhana, the characterization of his philosophy of history presented by Romila Thapar is very significant and an elaborate one. She said, "Kalhana was deeply imbued with the idea of dharma and for him historical events were basically the unfolding of the whole system of dharma in its religious, social and even legal manifestations. It meant not only the adherence to tradition of religion, but also the upholding of the social institutions as prescribed in Shastras. But Kalhana was not dogmatic as we shall see." She also points to the impact of Buddhism and theory of Karma on Kalhana's thinking.

Basically, from very early times the religious life of Kashmir was dominated by plural cults and there was a close relation between the cult belonging and social belonging. With the growth of the processes of assimilation or incorporation of these cults into various religious systems (which evolved with regions specificities in course of time), religion began to perform the function of providing a social identity, When we approach this concept in Rajatarangini from a sociological point of view and take into cognizance the identity of any of these groups and the totality of structures which it produced on the social and symbolic levels for assuring its own reproduction, religion being the part of that symbolic domain formed a frame of reference within which the local groups understood their past, interpreted their present and tried to foresee their future. Since religious and social structures were very closely related, it provided the material bases for the social identity of these groups. In other words, in their quest for carving out their social identity, the varied social groups took recourse to religion, whether it was Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Tantra, Shakta, varied Mother Goddess cults or Buddhism. Let me cite one of the examples from the bulk of the literary evidence available to us on this aspect in *Rajatarangini*. In Kashmir the Tantric religious practices were the outcome of a fusion between Brahmanical religion and folk or tribal religion and the absorption of the aboriginal Mother Goddess cults in the Brahmanical and heterodox pantheon points to the same conclusion. The worship of Sapt-matrikas assumed a prominent place in the Shakta Pantheon as the social surplus of their followers multiplied the wealth of producing masses and made rituals more complex. Most of the Mother Goddesses like Varahi, Aindri, etc. were very closely connected with the fertility rites which only indicate the importance of women in agro-based economy.

Kalhana clearly indicates that religion not only constituted one of the main components of group identity in Kashmir but it was also one of the key cultural factors which conditioned the very existence of various social groups. It was in this environment that the tradition of Sanskrit poets and chroniclers evolved. There is plenty of literature on these aspects produced by the priests and others before and after Kalhana's period, therefore it was but natural and reasonable for Kalhana to acknowledge the role and significance of Dharma and theory of Karma with strong Buddhist influences in the material and cultural life of Kashmir because he was deeply rooted in that society. That is also one of the reasons why the early portions of his work *Rajatarangini* are based on partly Brahmanical and partly historical base. E. H. Carr very rightly remarks that like other individuals, he (the historian) is also a social phenomenon, both the product and the conscious or unconscious spokesman of society to which he belongs; it is in this capacity that he approaches the facts of historical past.

Kalhana knew that religious rites had important social functions which were independent of any beliefs that may be held about the efficacy of the rites. The rites gave regulated expression to certain human feelings and sentiments and so kept these sentiments alive and active. It were in turn these sentiments which by their influence on the conduct of individuals made possible the perpetuation of an orderly social life. At the very outset he emphasizes the sentiment of Santa (resignation). He says: "When (the hearer) has well pondered over the sudden appearance of living beings that lasts for a moment only, then let him judge the sentiment of resignation (Santa) which is to rule supreme in this work (*Rajatarangini*).

In *Rajatarangini* the religious references to places in Kashmir also refer to many places in India and Central Asia showing that there was a constant religious interaction. This assertion is based on the premise that Kashmir is a part of the sacred geography of many Shaivite Puranic texts. Hence, going beyond the Shastric ideal to the Puranic sources and proceeding from here, we can argue that there were many sources of religious traditions in Kashmir, some of which went far beyond Kashmir as attested by the sacred geography and the etymology of the religious practices. What is significant is that all this mass of material is coherently organized in the Rajatarangini and here Kalhana strikes a balance between the 'normative' Shastric and the 'contextual' Agamic, Tantric and Puranic traditions. This point is important as the study of the region has resurfaced in recent times ever since the concept of region as an imagined community has gained credence in social science.

Thus for Kalhana, region is not just political or religious since the categories of identities he deals with are not static but very contextual and relative. A person is referred to as a Damara in one place and a Shaiva in another and Jajman in another context. It is interesting to notice that both the terms Damaras and Lavanyas being used for rebel leaders because Prithvihara, one of the rebel leaders, has been referred to both as a Damara and Lavanya showing fluid identities. In another instance, Kosthesvara has also been referred to both as Damara and Lavanya. Unlike other previous historical periods, Kalhana's period is historically significant since most of the developments like the Damara revolt and other economic and political institutions had crystallized for the first time en masse in Kashmir where we see for the first time the emergence of a region where the articulation of a unique regional personality is seen in the authoring of this text. Thus the *Rajatarangini* has become a reference point for all debates centering on

Kashmiriyat on account of its historical accuracy, voluminous coverage and pioneering treatment of diverse subject matter in a comparative method that is in consonance with other sources in Kashmir and beyond.

According to Romila Thapar's contention, there is a predominance of Shastric influence in Kalhana's writings and at the same time she also adds that it was also not dogmatic. This would be more meaningful if we read it in the context of patronage as the patrons of Kalhana wanted legitimacy and hence the religious Shastric preface to the text which is also interspersed with everyday events that can be seen in the epigraphic traditions. There are two reasons for this and both are contextual and interconnected. Firstly, the Shastric model had a lot of prestige as Sanskrit and religiosity had divine sanction but there was the problem of one to one co-relation as the shastric texts are static but the society in Kashmir had different social patterns based on divergences in production patterns, migrations and sectarian plurality reflected in the format - new castes like Damaras and Ekangas that were peculiar to Kashmir.

The second point is that contemporary events read independent of other events would stand in isolation and not be revered, therefore the masterly intermixture of same with religious events where time was frozen, like the Shastric injunctions that were reworked to produce ideals like the Ideal King, etc. Kalhana says that Kashmir land is Parvati and king is a portion of Shiva. Though he be wicked (dusto'pi), a wise man who desires his own prosperity, will not despise him. At another place he says that the duty of the King is the protection of his subjects. Between the king and the subjects the mediating influence of the hegemonic social groups like Damaras, Lavanyas, Ekangas and Tantrins was strong and in some situations all pervasive.

Since the Damaras occupy a substantial space in the narratives of Kalhana, their role needs to be outlined and it becomes necessary to see them in the context of state structures as they were primarily political actors. Veering this discussion to the nature of state society, we see that it would be meaningful to have a discussion on the structural changes in this volatile context. During Kalhana's period the kingdom of Kashmir had political institutions that constituted the pride of its royal servants and the envy of the neighbouring states. The King and the people constituted a self-sufficient body politic which would have been perfect if none of the members departed from his proper functioning The King's authority to dispense justice, to command the forces and to collect taxes was so extensive that it gave the impression of a firm monarchy. But it was so conflict-ridden that it not only affected the lives of many people very adversely but also persisted for such a long time so strongly and significantly that our chronicler had to take note of it. In fact, the concept of State as an entity distinct from the ruler and the ruled was not beyond the grasp of Kalhana.

While characterizing the State during the early period of Jaluka who was contemporary to Ashoka in the Indian period, he says: "Up to that time there existed in this Land, which had not yet reached its proper development in legal administration, wealth and other respects, a government in most countries. There were only seven main state officials; the judge, the revenue superintendent, the treasurer, the commander of army, the envoy, the purohita and the astrologer. By establishing eighteen offices (karmasthana) in accordance with traditional usage, the king created from the time onwards a condition of things as under Yudhisthira. However, it may reasonably be argued that prior to even *Nilmata Purana*, there was a territory, a government and people of Kashmir but there was no State in the sense of entity other than ruler and ruled. For a description of the State, Kalhana analyses the social relations on which the foundations of the State rested. It was by referring to universal ethical principles that Kalhana vindicated his study of Kashmir and termed the State as a principal object of thought. For example, Kalhana attributes supernatural powers to a good king while a cruel King Mihirkula, on the other hand, has been referred to as royal vetala or vampire. He says that evil kings meet death through the superior effect of their subject merits.

King Cakravarman who was praised by panegyrists, bards and flatterers, was condemned by Kalhana in these words: "Deceived in his mind by these praises he thought himself a god, and thus committed acts which were devoid of Judgement." Those kings who yield to the passion of love, are fond of wine or addicted to dice and are surrounded by drunkards who plunder the riches of treasury, are very contemptuously referred to by Kalhana. He considers kindness, cleverness, discretion, shrewdness, diplomacy and politeness as the virtues of a good king. He says: "Blessed are those rulers who sleep at night in happiness, having before seen their citizens in comfort everywhere as if they were their own children." The contribution of Kalhana is clearly manifest in promoting and substantiating an awareness of historical distinctiveness and intrinsic worth of Kashmir's institutions. It is in the eighth book of *Rajatarangini* that the concept of State as a substantive entity becomes discernible in the purest form of monarchy.

Affirming the reliability of his sources, Kalhana has evinced a great concern to illustrate how the foundations of this monarchical frame of the State were shaken by violence, feuds and group solidarity in which Damaras played a prominent role. These powerful land owners and their perpetual conflicts with the State constituted a central feature of the region's history. Kalhana first mentions Damara in the fourth taranga (book) of

Rajatarangini where King Lalitaditya cautions about the threat of a Damara power and the king says, "If they should keep more wealth, they would become strong enough to neglect the commands of the King." It was in the rule of the second Lohara dynasty in the 12th century that Damaras came to the forefront as a formidable power. Kalhana narrates in detail the political conflicts in which Damaras played a leading role, by alliances and alignments they established their hold in the region's politics. Unfortunately, Kalhana failed to enlighten us much on the processes of the development of Damara power. Kalhana gave us the information on internal organization of the Damara organization which was hierarchical. He also records the process of induction of Damaras into the offices of state. His hatred is expressed in some of the passages. "The robbers (dasyus) resembling a mass of goblins, tasted in the city, as it were, the pleasure of the heaven though they were fit only for rustic fare. In another place, the chronicler refers to them as "The Damaras from the environs of the city, are more like cultivators, though they carry arms. He makes use of derogatory terms to refer to Damaras as Dasyu. The term Damara connoted essentially a status not confined to any particular caste. For Kalhana they were evidently present in all the important affairs in which they took part and were the final cause. Kalhana perceives history as a storehouse of examples that men ought to ponder for their ethical value-examples of the universal qualities exhibited by their ancestors, and present in themselves, as they engaged in the events of their time.

Kalhana would fit in aptly with the statement of Clifford Geertz that "A way of seeing is also a way of not seeing" as he stands tall in isolation to provide voluminous details and an anchoring point about the history of Kashmir that no other contemporary chronicler or poet has done. Thus the indispensability of Kalhana's accounts for the reconstruction of Kashmiri historiography is the first main point and preceding this is the caveat that Kalhana's works should be read not literally but in their larger context so as to give an objective picture. A comparative method approaching a literary masterpiece with focus on events and explanations outlines Kalhana's methodology. Refreshingly the causative and explanatory factors are for the most part worldly and draw from rationality rather than attributing supernatural motives. A strain of Buddhist causality alongside strong Arab and Persian literary tradition is seen in Kashmiri philosophy and is apparent in Kalhana's works, particularly the emphasis on interconnectedness of events.

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KALHANA AND HIS RAJATARANGINI

Dr Madhvi Yasin

Indian architecture, sculpture, cave-temples and paintings, in most cases, do not reveal the names of their authors. The peculiar trait of self-abnegation is specially characteristic of ancient India. This is also noticed in the case of some of the literary and historical works. In case of Rajatarangini (The River of Kings), we at least know the name of the author is hidden in oblivion. Kalhana shares the common fate of the Indian authors of note whose memory lives solely in their works. The introductory note attached to the end of each book of Rajatarangini gives the name of the author as 'Kalhana', 'the son of the great Kashmiri minister, the illustrious Lord Canpaka'. Historical deductions reveal that he was a Brahmin by caste. The Sanskrit style of Rajatarangini is similar to that of the accepted style of the Pandits of Brahmin descent. The introduction to each book of his chronicle begins by prayers of Shiva in his form of Ardhanarishwar representing God in union with Parvati. Besides, Jonaraja the continuator author of Rajatarangini, has referred to Kalhana with the epithet 'dvija'. A study of his chronicle displays his friendly attitude towards Buddhism. His faith may be epitomized in one word 'eclecticism'.

The name Kalhana was derived through the Prakrit 'Kalhan' from the Sanskrit word 'Kalyana', meaning 'blessed'.

Kalhana wrote his work during the years 1148-1149. The style and the spirit of the work shows that the author must have attained a mature age. The elaborate description of the unsteady conditions of Sussal's reign (A.D.1112-20) makes it clear that he must have been of age at that time. Hence, his probable date of birth might have been the beginning of the twelfth century.

The century of the birth of Kalhana was marked, in the history of Kashmir, by dynastic upheaval resulting in many important political changes. King Harsha (A.D.1089-1101) seemed at first to give Kashmir a period of good government but he fell victim to his own lavishness and extravagance. After his murder, Kashmir for seven years more, witnessed civil wars, which brought death and destruction in its train.

Kalhana was gifted with scientific approach and a critical temperament. His portrayal of various classes of Kashmiri people is very graphic and true to life. The reaction of the common folk to the disturbed political conditions of the time is full of realistic touches. He says that the people were 'callously prepared to welcome any change'[. His description of the idle and indifferent city crowds and their feelings shows that he thoroughly understood the nature of his countrymen.

The unsettled political conditions of the time negatived all chances of patronage to the creative works of art; hence Rajatarangini was not written under the patronage of any king. Kalhana had a high sense of his responsibilities. He considers only historians "worthy of praise, whose word, like that of a judge, keeps free from love or hatred in relating the facts of the past...and surpasses even the stream of nectar.....and can place the past times before the eyes of men."

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It is interesting to note that Kalhana prepared himself for the role of a poet. The Sanskrit classical poetry cultivated by Kalhana reveals that he had an intensive training in the Indian rhetoric, Alamkar's astra, and the equal mastery of Sanskrit grammatical lore. His literary studies were deep and comprehensive. All the known literature of his time, beginning from Epics to Kalidasa's works, Raghuvainsha and Meghduta and Bilhan's ikramankadeva-charita and Harshcharita, were read by him. Stein says: "His literary training indeed, had been of the strictly traditional type and the manner in which he employed it shows no conscious departure from the conventional norm. Yet it is clear that Kalhan was not man of schools, absorbed in his Shastras."

Kalhana scrupulously studied the original sources including inscriptions of various kinds before he started writing the *Rajatarangini*. He also studied coins and inspected buildings.

Kalhana found all possible avenues to his hereditary carrier closed on account of unsettled political conditions of the country. So the best way to employ his talents, he thought was to write down the history of his country from the ancient to his time. He was also inspired by original patriotism. By painting a glorious picture of the past he wished that his countrymen should shed the inferiority complex, feel proud and try to emulate their past traditions. Therefore, the Great Asoka, he shows, was the kind of king whose examples were to be followed. It is Kalhana's sheer patriotism when he says Kashmir of spiritual merits, "Kashmir may be conquered by the force but not by the force of soldiers."

Kalhana has honestly and impartially related the events. While recording the contemporary happenings, Kalhana had presented the principal figures in their individual character and not as types.

Here he represents a contrast to Bana and Bilhana in treating historical personages, who have painted their heroes all white and the enemies all back.

Rajatarangini is class by itself in Indian literature. It is very much different from Charitas, which were composed under royal patronage. The scholarpets of Charitas had the rare gift of inventing fables and myths and applying their talent in glorifying the achievements of their patrons. Their works are masterpieces of literature dabbling in subtle poetic art, rhetorical embellishment, and alamkarshastra. Rajataangini, on the other hand, is the work of a detached and impartial mind, viewing the past and present with historical acumen and not in a spirit of hero worship or pleasing the patron. Rajatarangini not only forms a class by itself in Sanskrit compositions but has a striking resemblance in character to the chronicles of medieval Europe and of the Islamic East.

While writing the first three Books (chapters) of Rajatarangini, Kalhana made full use of tradition, whether written or oral, and the chronicles which were evidently based on such traditions. In writing down these traditions, at times, the critic in Kalhana comes out. For instance he mentions three traditions of the death of the King Lalitaditya, without starting what is true, and comments; "When the great meet their end there arise stories indicative of their uncommon grandeur." King Meghavahan's exploits have been described in such a fanciful manner that Kalhana himself is apprehensive that they might not be accepted as true but he tries to justify them by comparing them with the cruelties of Harsha, which, in their turn, might not be believed.

For the last two chapters of his book, Kalhana's main sources were his contemporaries, his father, fellow-countryman and his own memory. Thus many incidents of the treachery of Bhikacara's troops, he categorically writes, were witnessed by him. It is no surprise that much of the history of the previous two generations, he got from his father and father's friends, who held key-posts in the politics of their times.

To give the details, Rajatarangini consists of eight books (Chapters) of unequal size, written in Sanskrit in nearly 8,000 verses of rare literary merit. The text may roughly be divided into three sections:

1. Book I-III are based on traditions.

2. In Books IV-VI, dealing with Karakota and Utpala dynasties, he has made use of the works of earlier chronicles who were contemporaries or near contemporaries of the events described.

3. For books VII-VIII, dealing with the two Lohara dynasties he made use of personal knowledge and eyewitness accounts, the latter often perhaps received at second or third hand.

The style of Rajatarangini is not crude or difficult. These are scattered verses adorned in flowery language or donned in fanciful imagery, of country Sanskrit. Kalhana's idea was that even a historical text must be a work of art and has tried to make his work attractive to readers. His accounts are graphic and vivid except in his last two books, where so many characters are introduced without proper introduction. Kalhana who had maintained strict adherence to chronology from the beginning of the book most religiously, had, in the second and third sections not followed it to the letter.

Evidently he was writing his book for those who were familiar with the events of the period.

Kalhana in writing Rajatarangini set a tradition for history writing. His book, after him, was continued by four successive historians from the point where he left, to some years after Kashmir's annexation by the Mughal Emperor, Akbar.

The mission of a historian, according to Kalhana is to make vivid before one's eyes pictures of a bygone age. History has a unique gift to immortalizing personages and events, and in this it even surpasses the mythical ambrosis, while the latter immortalizes only the man who drinks it, the former all those whom it touches. Kalhana was aware that his work would not only achieve permanence, but would enliven all the actors as himself. He had another object also in view. He says "This saga, which is properly made up, should be useful for Kings as a stimulant or a sedative, like a physic, according to time and place." Kalhana expected that both good and bad Kings would derive profit from his work. He is a staunch advocate of historical impartiality.

Kalhana's assessment of more recent happenings is fair. He paints no character wholly black or white. He had deep insight in man's nature and his psychology. He says: "As in heaven the little clouds change shape and take on the form of elephants, leopards, monsters, serpents, horses and other beasts, so do the waves of feeling change in the hearts of mortals, from kindness to harshness as the moments vary."

The didactic feature of Rajatarangini may be traced to the selections of Sunta rasa (the sentiment of resignation). Here Kalhana's avowed motive is to show that material prosperity and royal possessions are objects of transitory glory. The evil acts of man racoil on him by the strong hands of destiny. In the same way acts of policy, statecraft and individual conduct are again and again praised and analysed in the light of Dharma or Nitishastra.

Rajatarangini appears to wage a war in favour of benevolent despotism and deprecates feudalism. Believing in orthodox Rajniti (Statecraft), he had his own conception of good government. Explicitly or implicitly, Rajatarangini carries the idea that a strong King is the ideal King, who has firm control over unruly elements, but is benevolent towards his people and sympathetic to their wishes. He chooses his ministers with discretion, and listens to their counsels with respect. Kalhana has shown his unflinching disapproval of Damars, the petty feudal chiefs, who were the cause of anarchy and confusion in Kashmir since the death of Harsha. Another motive, perhaps, in writing Rajatarangini was that of inspiring the Kings of Kashmir with their ancient glory and prowess, and to curb the unruly elements, who aimed at making the king weak. He says "The crab kills its father, and the white ant destroys its mother, but the ungrateful Kayasthas, when they become powerful, destroy everything." At times, Kalhana becomes pessimistic. The words put in the mouth of Harsha symbolises it: "This land, after having been a virtuous woman, has fallen like a prostitute in the arms of insolent. Henceforth, whoever knows now to succeed by mere intrigue will aspire to that kingdom, whose power has gone." Here the historian shows his prophetic vision. He is no more simply a poet or a scholar.

Rajatarangini is a saga showing the force of Karma. Whatever good or bad a man does in this life, Kalhana believes, reaps the harvest for that in the life to come. The force of Karma shapes events and provides the basic moral sanction. Fate, according to Kalhana, is the second force influencing the human destiny. Fate is sometimes used as a synonym for God. God or the gods often influence human affairs. Sometimes adverse fate is overcome by those who trust in their arms. Here also *Rajatarangini* gives another hopeful message to his countrymen that whatever fate or creator might have in store for them, only a strong king confident of his powers could save Kashmir.

Rajatarangini interlinks the karma of the kings with that of his subjects. Good kings arise through the merits of their subjects. A king and his subjects could mould the orders of the nature.

This great work has also some shortcomings. The sources used by him, were not critically analysed and discussed. His narrative becomes more legendary and anecdotal in the middle of the ninth century, when one seems to reach contemporary records. "Of the defects of the records and the conflicting opinions which according to Kalhana's introduction rendered his task difficult, we nowhere receive distinct indication." Fabulous stories, manifest impossibilities, exaggerations and superstitious beliefs, have been described as historical truths which betrays his credulity. Similarly, Kalhana's chronology is also not based on scientific data. Of course, one cannot expect critical judgement in matters of chronology from an author who has started dating history from legendary dates of the coronation of Yudhisthir from epics, and attributes three hundred years to single ruler, Ranaditya. Kalhana could not and should not be blamed for this, as it was general trend among the Indians.

Rajatarangini also presents a contrast within itself as its earlier part is more of a fiction, and later part, that is early medieval part, is real history. It vividly describes the falling glory of Kashmir, palace intrigues, murders, sedition, civil wars and treachery. The life of the ordinary common folk has not been touched. It is the history of kings, royal families, and nobility, justifying the title "River of the Kings."

(Excerpted.)

KALHANA'S *RAJATARANGINI*

Prof Shafi Shauq

We hardly know anything for certain about the life and the times of Kalhana Pandit except what he himself intimates through the colophon of each of the eight books of his magnum opus *Rajatarangani* :

इति श्रीमहाकविश्रोकल्हणकृतायां राजतरङ्गिण्यामष्टमस्तरङ्गः
कृतिः श्रीमहामात्यचम्पकप्रभुवनोर्महाकवेः कल्हणस्य ।

Here ends the seventh book of *Rajataranagani* by Kalhana, son of Champakaprabhu, the great minister of Kashmira.[1]

This masterpiece in Sanskrit literature remained an integral part of the learned Kashmiri Brahmins since its composition in the 12th century, in 1148 A.D. to be precise. The Sarasvatas, Kashmiri Brahmins call themselves so, considered it a part of their kulaacharyaparampara (tradition of the dynasty of thinkers) to preserve and circulate copies of the *mahakavya* among the Brahmins. It was almost revered as a sacred heirloom of Sanskrit antiquity, and numerous copies of penmanship were made and circulated among the earnest readers who prided in possessing its copies in their private book collections. In his *Detailed Report of a Tour in Search of Sanskrit MSS*, Dr. G. Buhler wrote about the main purpose of his exploration of Sanskrit MSS, that is to procure copies of Kalhana's *Rajatarangani*.

G. Bühler, who was escorted by scholars like Sahebrama, visited various libraries in Kashmiri Brahmin families, particularly in Khunmoh and Srinagar, and, eventually, succeeded in procuring two copies of the book written in Sharda script. The book is considered the mother of all the books of Kashmir history written in Kashmir both in Sanskrit and Persian. It had remained the cynosure of all the European scholars since Fracoise Bernier (1620-1688), who as a physician accompanied Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb and visited Kashmir in 1665. He later published his travelogue *Travels in the Mogul Empire A.D. 1656-1668* from Paris in 1670 that stimulated curiosity among the European scholars. Kalhana's *Rajataranagani* was the focus of much debate when Francis Gladwin's translation of *Aaini Akbari* of Abul Fazl was published in 1783-6. There was an unambiguous reference to Kalhana in the book.

The original Sanskrit manuscript of *Rajataranagani*, however, was discovered by H. T. Colebrooke in 1805 in Calcutta in a Brahman family. Among the Europeans scholars who were enthusiastically engaged in exploring the genius of the East and studying its antiquities, Dr. Horace Hayman Wilson is definitely one of the few such scholars who achieved great success in the early nineteenth century. In 1825, he published his famous essay on the Hindu history of the Kashmir in the transactions of the Bengal Asiatic Society. "Dr. Wilson showed," wrote Aurel Stein, "that the Sanskrit History of Kashmir called the *Rajatarangani*, for which Sir William Jones had looked out in vain, was not one entire composition, as had till then been thought, but a series of four chronicles, written by different authors, the last three being intended to serve as successive continuations of the first and the most important work of the series - this is the Rajatarangani of Kalhana."

H.H. Wilson wrote:

> About the great classic composition yet discovered, to which the title History can with any propriety be applied is the *Rajtarangani*, a history of Kashmir. This work was first introduced to the knowledge of the Mohammedans by the

summary which he has given of its contents was taken, as he inform us, from a Persian translation of the Hindu original, prepared by order of Akber.

In the introduction to his essay, Dr. Wilson tells us that Bernier had attempted a French translation of *Rajatarangani*, but nothing is known of this translation.

Wilson consulted almost all the authentic sources of history, and among the Persian histories, he mentions the *Nawadirul Akhbar* by Rafi-ud Din Mohammad, the *Wakiat-I Kashmir* by Mohammad Azam, the *Tarikhi Kashmir* by Narayan Koul, and the *Goheri Alem Tohfetus Shahi* by Badia-ud Din. Wilson's essay contains, among other things, several thought-provoking and debatable details of these histories.

> …(T)he history of Badia-ud Din, the son of Mohammad Azam that it was written, according to the statement of Badia-ud Din, after consulting authorities, particularly "the *Nur Namah,* an ancient history of Kashmir, written by Shaikh Nur-ud Din Wali in the Kashmirian language, and rendered into Persian by Moulavi Ahmad Almeh in the Reign of Zani-ul Abidin, a copy of which the author had procured from one of the descendants of the last independent princes of Kashmir, who were settled as private individuals in Akbarabad of Agra; and it is to be presumed that to this work Badia-ud Din owes the extraordinary additions which he has made occasionally to the labors of his predecessors, and their common original." [4]

Wilson also sums up the portion of Badia-ud Din's history, which deals with the origin of the Kashmiri people:

> ……(H)e begins with the creation, and brings Adam from Sarandip, where all Mohammedan authorities place him after the fall, to Kashmir. The sovereignty of Kashmir continued in the line of Seth for 1110 years, when the

Hindus conquered the province and Havinand Raja, and his family ruled it till the period of the deluge. After the flood Kashmir was peopled by a tribe from Turkistan. The inhabitants were taught the worship of one god, by Moses, who died there, and the tomb or place of sepulture is still to be seen in Kashmir…. These details are sufficient to give an idea of Bedia-ud Din's, or probably of Shaikh Noor-ud Din's historical merits. [5]

In 1823, W. Moorcroft, George Trebeck and Guthrie, three fervent orientalists visited Kashmir and studied the past of Kashmiri society. Moorcroft also procured a manuscript of Kalhana's *Rajatarangani.* He wrote about his experiences in Kashmir in his book *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces (1819–25)* in collaboration with his fellow traveler, G. Trebeck. The illustrated two-volume book was later edited and published by H.H. Wilson in 1841.

The world famous classic Kalhana's *Rajataranagani* is considered one of the earliest books in historiography. The book is, however, a collection of as many as four book; including Kalhana's work, it includes books by Jonaraja, Srivara, and Praja Bhata. Kalhana's work gives us glimpses of the lives of the kings who ruled the kingdom of Kashmir from the earliest known history to his own time, that is 1148 A.D. when Harsha was in power. Jonaraja's *Rajataranagani,* also titled Rajabali; recorded the events in the lives of the kings from 1148 to 1412, that is to the reign of Sultan Zain-al Abiding. The third *Rajataranagani* was written by the court poet of Sultan Zainal Abidin, namely Srivara Pandit who covered the events of the kingdom up to 1477. The fourth *Rajataranagani* is the composition of Prajya Bhatta, in the reign of Mughal emperor Akbar. All these works were translated into lucid and plain English prose by a celebrated scholar Jogesh Chunder Dutt and published under the title *Kings of Kashmir* in 1879 from Kolkata. Another English translation of the work is available under the Title *Kalhana's Rajatarangani: A Chronicle of the Kings of Kashmir*, by M.A. Stein that was published in 1892. The last one is significant in terms of the detailed annotations by Stein.

Thus Kalhana's *Rajataranagani* is more a work of literature than pure history. Comprising eight parts, the book is written in 8000 *padas* (rhymed verses) in highly embellished courtly language. We can evaluate it as literary work of the tradition of narratives about the kings, their love and their rise and fall. All the events are mixed with romance or tales of fantasy. It has to be appreciated both as a work of poetry and then first chronicle written in the subcontinent. It is worthwhile to note that Kalhana was a renowned court poet; one of his long poems that has survived is

Ardhanarisvarastorta, a long poem.

Kalhana, like a true poet enunciates the purpose of the poem in the prefatory *pada*.

I salute Hara who bestows on his worshippers
the tree of Paradise, Hara is beautiful.
like a beam of light emitted by the jewels
hidden in the heads of serpents adoring him.

कविप्रजापतींत्यक्त्वा रम्यनिर्माणशालिनः ।
न पश्येत् सर्व्वसंवेद्यान् भावान् प्रतिभया यदि ।
तदन्यद्दिव्यदृष्टित्वे किमिव ज्ञापकं कवेः ।

In retelling the events of the past, Kalhana believes in poets' ability of remaining impartial and objective. He wrote:

That virtuous (poet) alone is worthy of praise who
free from love or hatred, restricts his muse
to the exposition of facts. [6]

He was however, conscious of the limitations of the historian in selecting and reporting the events of the past that have descended down to him either through oral tradition or written words.

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THE AFTERLIVES OF KALHANA'S *RAJATARANGINI*

Prof Chitralekha Zutshi

Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* is in many ways a singular narrative, a Sanskrit *kavya* that is also a history, deeply engaged with narrating Kashmir's distant and more recent pasts with a poetic flair. Perhaps as a result it has lived on in its continuations and translations long after it was composed in the twelfth century. This essay briefly charts the lives of the narrative after its composition to suggest that *Rajatarangini* should be thought about not simply as a single narrative, but rather a set of narratives, even perhaps a genre, that formed a critical part of the Kashmiri narrative tradition and the Indian literary-nationalist imagination. A focus on the afterlives of the narrative allows a glimpse into the conversations among languages—Sanskrit, Persian, Kashmiri, and English—and ideas of history, literature and nation taking place in the Indian subcontinent in the early modern and modern eras.

The most notable continuations of Kalhana's narrative in Sanskrit were carried out by Jonaraja and Srivara in the fifteenth century. As Luther Obrock (2013) has persuasively demonstrated, these narratives—in particular Srivara's *Jainatarangini*, begun in 1459—were not merely slavish imitations of Kalhana's style, but rather narrated the contemporary in novel ways. Composed during the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (1420-70), the Persian translation of these interconnected Sanskrit narratives was also undertaken in his court. Another Persian translation was carried out soon after Kashmir's incorporation into the Mughal Empire in 1586 under the orders of Emperor Akbar (Fazl 2004, 844).

This began the tradition of Persian historical writing in Kashmir that creatively blended ideas from the *Rajatarangini* narratives with more universalist tropes drawn from the history of Islam. The Persian narratives that formed the core of this tradition, such as *Tarikh-i-Haider Malik Chadurah* by Haider Malik (1620-21) and Khwaja Mohammad Azam Dyadmari's *Waqiat-i-Kashmir* (Events of Kashmir, 1746), grappled with the spiritual and political task of narrating the past through a complex engagement with the *Rajatarangini* narratives that came before them as well as the political contexts in which they were composed. They were not, as Indological scholarship has argued, poor, unreliable imitations or 'digested' summaries of the Sanskrit texts (Slaje 2004, 9). For the Persian *tarikh*s, the Sanskrit corpus embodied a specifically historical genre that needed to be continued while at the same time being transformed and molded to fit the needs of historical composition in the present.

Haider Malik, for instance, who composed his narrative towards the beginning of Mughal rule in Kashmir, recognized *Rajatarangini* as his *tarikh*'s literary predecessor, and began the narrative of Kashmir's past not with the advent of Islam on its landscape, but with the stories of its very inception as a habitable land. It is here that the multiple influences on the text, including the indigenous Sanskrit and Persian traditions as well as more universal Islamic histories, becomes quite apparent. The stories, as narrated in the text, begin with the classical tale of Kashmir's origin from the lake Satisar, as related in *Rajatarangini*. This is not where the text's discussion of Kashmir's origin ends. Haider Malik goes on to state that Islamic historians had also written on the subject; according to them, when prophet Solomon landed in

Kashmir on the mountain now known as Koh-i-Sulaiman, he found most low-lying areas flooded. Desiring to make the beautiful land with a fine climate habitable, he assigned the task of draining the water to the jinns Kashf and Mir. The land that emerged as a result of their efforts was named Kashf-mir, or Kashmir, after them (1991, 3-4).

The land of Kashmir, thus, was not just a product of the activities of personalities such as Sage Kashyap and Prophet Solomon, but quite as much the Sanskrit and Persian narratives that recounted the efforts of these personalities in creating it. In the *tarikh*, the genealogies of the land and the genealogies of its multiple narrative traditions were clearly intertwined.

For the author of *Waqiat-i-Kashmir* (1746), Khwaja Mohammad Azam Dyadmari, the tradition of historical composition in Kashmir began with the *Rajatarangini* narratives, but also included the Persian *tarikh*s. In the dramatically altered socio-political scenario of mid-eighteenth century Kashmir, with the Mughal imperial entity in decline and the relationship between temporal and spiritual authority askew, the text sought to restore balance through an entwined narration of Kashmir's spiritual and political pasts.

One of the central subjects of *Waqiat* is Kashmir itself. In this regard, the text is replete with descriptions of the land drawn from the Sanskrit narratives, especially Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*. Instead of writing in praise of the author's patron, or the contemporary ruler, which usually followed the *hamd* in praise of God and the prophet in most Persian *tarikh*s, *Waqiat* launches into a lengthy encomium to Kashmir's peerless nature amongst all the countries of the world. It describes Kashmir's sweet springs, its lush meadows, blooming gardens, pure climate and naturally delineated boundaries. Echoing Kalhana, Dyadmari states that Kashmir was an especially blessed land: 'Mountains and forests surround this mulk like the walls of a fort and until the people of the land themselves invite in invaders and join them, no one dare conquer it' (2001, 8).

The history of Kashmir, moreover, had to begin with its origin. The first chapter of the text thus begins with the familiar description of the emergence of Kashmir from Satisar, as recorded, according to Dyadmari, by Sanskrit historians. Here the story follows *Rajatarangini* quite closely, except when the author states that the land emerged and was settled by Brahman families after Noah's flood (13-15).

For Dyadmari, history writing was not a personal endeavor designed to reveal the origins of the author's genealogy and thus establish his legitimacy and that of his text, but rather an attempt to delineate the contours of the *mulk*, and the divine individuals who had shaped it, for a wider audience. In a sense, the historical narrative and the *mulk* were indistinguishable.

In this, Dyadmari was strikingly similar to the late-nineteenth century Indian nationalists who carried out English translations of Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* with the objective of recording the history of the Indian nation while at the same time re-defining the project of historical writing itself. The first complete English translation of Kalhana's text in prose form was carried out by J.C. Dutt in three volumes, published in 1879, 1887 and 1898. Dutt's translation, in which he described *Rajatarangini* as 'an account of a people who lived from the earliest period in a corner of India', reads like a history textbook with a chronological narration of events. According to him, this translation was the best that could be accomplished as far as recording India's history was concerned, given the absence of reliable sources for the task. Heavily editing the text by expunging all mythical and marvelous stories from it, Dutt's translation was an attempt to present *Rajatarangini* as a 'sober history' that fit European standards of history writing (1879, ii-iii).

It is interesting to note that in his review of his brother's translation, R.C. Dutt resurrected many of these stories from the translation's appendices, presenting them as folk traditions invaluable for understanding the broad themes within India's collective past (1880). An examination of J.C. Dutt's translation alongside his brother's review of the translation reveals that in late-nineteenth century India, the nationalist definition of history as a strictly positivist undertaking based on empirically verifiable facts was already being questioned by another, equally nationalist, understanding of history as a story of the people, their culture, popular traditions, and hence the way in which ordinary people related to their traditions and their past.

These ideas came to fruition in R.S. Pandit's translation of *Rajatarangini*, published in 1935, which presented the text as a national literary text for the consumption of an incipient national audience. Pandit had personal and political motivations for translating *Rajatarangini* into English. Pandit spent his many months of incarceration in colonial jails translating Sanskrit classics into English, including *Rajatarangini*, which held special meaning, since it was carried out for his father-in-law, Motilal Nehru, who, being unacquainted with Sanskrit, had expressed his regret at being unable to read this 'authentic history of the old family homeland' (V. Pandit 1979, 169). Pandit viewed the transmission of Sanskrit literature to the people of India as critical to developing their sense of nationhood.

As a result, he was less interested in presenting *Rajatarangini* as an empirically sound record of past events as he was in discussing it as an exemplary piece of historical literature. That Pandit saw himself as the recipient of a collective literary heritage through the text of *Rajatarangini* is evident from the fact that he placed his translation within the longer genealogy of indigenous translations of the text, beginning with its Persian translations and acknowledging previous European language translations (R.S. Pandit 1968, xiii-xv). It is interesting to point out here that, unlike J.C. Dutt, Pandit did not dismiss the text's Persian translations as corrupt interpolations on the body of a pristine Sanskrit text.

Pandit discusses *Rajatarangini* as a historical *kavya* that encapsulated the literary heritage of the Indian nation, and more importantly, the character of its people. Its didactic verses contained the essence of the text, according to him, because it was these verses that allowed its readers to not just know their past but also to experience it. He noted that, 'Archeology has indeed laid bare for us the secrets of the dead past but the past eludes pursuit in the dust of antiquarianism', while the past through 'Kalhana's pen-pictures…is vivified and lives again' (xix). Pandit's 'invitation' to the translation argued that *Rajatarangini* was a work of such 'great scope' that to view it simply as a historical narrative would be to do it injustice. Instead, the narrative had the capacity to give enjoyment 'as history, an epic, or a semi-tragic drama' (xx-xxi).

Even as a historian, moreover, according to Pandit, Kalhana tended toward 'humanistic studies and toward art rather than towards economic life…History, according to him, was not something to learn, but something to make people live and understand life' (xxx-xxxi). Kalhana's poem, Pandit pointed out, was inlaid with all eight *Rasas* or sentiments—love, merriment, pathos, wrath, courage, terror, repulsion, and marvel—that were designed 'to teach the art of life' (xxi).

Pandit recognized *Rajatarangini* as 'the earliest extant history of Kasmir', although only secondarily after its primary function as national literature (xix). Its historical value, therefore, rested in the universal themes to which it gave voice that cut across regions and defined the national narrative of Indian history, rather than the particularities of the history of Kashmir. Pandit's invitation stated that Kalhana 'lived a free man in an independent country', and 'loved his Arcadian homeland', whose natural beauty he described in great detail, and yet was free from 'narrow nationalism', since his poem displayed a love for Indian mythology and folklore as well as its flora and fauna (xix, xxi-xxii, xxxi).

Rajatarangini's status as national text was established in part due to the fact that it was written in Sanskrit—a language with 'pan-Indian pretensions'—and could therefore be seamlessly incorporated into the Indian literary canon, but also because it was not a religious epic or code of laws, but rather a secular text, a fact that particularly suited a secular nationalist such as Pandit. This allowed for the text to be compared to Western classical literature while also emphasizing its continued value for Indian life and civilization. According to Pandit, Kalhana was, not unlike Aeschylus or Homer, 'a poet of veracity and universality' (xxiii), and at the same time, 'the heritage of India which has come to us through the medium of Samskrta is a living one' (xvii). Asserting the primacy, universality and continued importance of Sanskrit through a secular text allowed Pandit to perform the double act of appropriating this history of a region into the nation's collective literary heritage, thereby incorporating the region into the nation.

Pandit's translation, which he admitted was not meant for 'the learned fraternity', performed several functions, located as it was at the confluence of a variety of philosophical currents. Drawing on the romantic-nationalist definition of literature, it presented *Rajatarangini* as not merely a history, but instead a certain genre of Sanskrit literature that embodied the essence of the Indian nation. In the process, it challenged the colonial historical method based on empirical, fact-based research, arguing that a narrative of the past devoid of imagination was not only meaningless but also unhistorical, since it could not represent the higher truths that embodied the best characteristics of the national past.

It was literature that gave history—particularly the history of the nation—meaning and it was precisely Kalhana's creativity and artistic sense that prevented the text from making prejudicial and partial misrepresentations (see 21n). Not surprisingly, it was by focusing on *Rajatarangini* as national literature in Sanskrit rather than regional history, that Pandit drew the region firmly into the narrative of Indian history.[1]

The Persian continuations and English translations of *Rajatarangini* remind us that the narrative cannot be interpreted as a single text from the twelfth century that displays (or fails to display) the characteristics of a history or work of literature. Not only did the content of the continuations and translations create new texts of *Rajatarangini*, but more significantly, by engaging with contemporary concerns over ideas of history, literature and their relationship to definitions of the Kashmiri and Indian nation, they presented the narrative and the literary-historical tradition of which it was a part to their readers in a variety of novel ways.

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KALHANA: AN ILLUSTRIOUS HISTORIAN OF KASHMIR

Prof Farooq Fayaz

In the art of history writing, Kashmir outshines all other neighboring states in India. The valley has a distinction of having a well documented historical narrative which covers its long historical record stretching to almost five thousand years. For leaving behind a well defined historical text, the credit goes to none other than the illustrious son of the soil- Kalhana Pandit.

Life and times of Kalhana

True to the tradition, Kalhana, like other Indian authors treated it less significant to write anything about his own life or family in his work. It is only in the colophons attached to the end of each book or tarang of *Rajatarangni* that Kalhana mentions about himself—as the son of Lord Canapaka—the great Kashmiri minister. On the basis of internal evidence, Aurel Stein, very accurately identifies Canapaka with a minister serving during King Harsha (1089-1101) as the lord of the gate or *duarpati*, whom Kalhana mentioned in connection with the ill-fated king. The dynastic revolution following Harsha's murder which had cast his throne and life, had a lasting effect on the fortunes of Kalhana's family. It is hence evident that the chronicler's father , who in Harsha's reign had occupied one of the highest posts of old Kashmir administration played no longer any part in public life after the monarch's death. Another family member whose name stands mentioned in the chronicle is Kanaka who is said to be the uncle of Kalhana. Kanaka is believed to have attained mastery in the art of music and is said to have won the admiration of king Harsha, who himself was a fond lover of music. From Parihaspora mentioned as the birth place of Kanaka, the uncle of Kalhana, it is inferred that with the utmost probability this town might be the original home of Kalhana's family.

Despite having strong Brahmanical connections, Kalhana, as is evident through the narrative, seems to have deep respect and love for Shaivite cult. This is deduced from his respectful references to Bhatta Kallata, one of the chief exponents of Shaivism in Kashmir. Equally important clue in this connection is further provided by distinctive style of the writer who begins almost each canton of the chronicle with a salutation to Siva. Kalhana's love and respect for Shaivite creed did not cultivate in him the seeds of religious fanaticism. There are abundance of references in the chronicle which suggest that Kalhana and his family were tolerant and friendly towards other religions especially Buddhism. Kalhana provides ample space in his narrative wherein he showers all praise for extant Buddhist structures and images found in Buddhist viharas and bhavans. Though Buddhism had long back fallen in disuse and had lost the royal patronage in the valley, the chronicler not only appreciates the artistic glory of paintings on the walls of bhavans and viharas but he praises the rich collection of Buddhist manuscripts as well. To quote Stein *"Kalhana does not hesitate to refer repeatedly to the Bodhisattvas or to Buddha himself as the benefactor of all beings, but the embodiment of perfect charity and nobility of feeling. They are to him beings of absolute goodness who do not feel anger even against the sinner, but in patience render him kindness"*

Having grown-up in closed Brahminical order, Kalhana never believed in class and cast distinctions. The reader finds countless references in the narrative where the author speaks with admiration about the praiseworthy contributions of those people belonging to the lowest depths of social pyramid. As a true historian, he never falls prey to pseudo nationalistic or jingoistic madness. He amply praises Bengal warriors who undertook rigorous journey from Bengal to Kashmir to take revenge of the assassination of their king at Trehgam Kashmir. Kalhana praises the brave Bengali warriors like this, *'By the showers of their blood was made resplendent their extraordinary devotion to the Liege-Lord and the earth became blessed"*

Selecting history as a discipline demands a keen sense of public and political pulse of the land and the people coupled with a penetrating eye to understand the diverse forces and factors which play major role in fabricating the historical landscape of a particular geographical and cultural region, which is, of course fashioned by vigorous training received in diverse fields of learning and scholarship. Belonging to traditional Brahmanical family and having close connections with the royal family, Kalhana is sure to have received enough training in the established branches of knowledge prevalent in medieval Kashmir. There is considerable evidence in the chronicle that provides a marked clue regarding the author's wide learning. It is amply evident from the narrative that not only was he well acquainted with the standard works of poetry such as Ragavansha and Meghdoota but had also studied the epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* as a source material for reconstructing the historical past of the pre-historic Kashmir. As Stein puts it, *'What distinguished these epic stories to the Indian mind from events of historical times is only the superior interest due to the glamour of a heroic age, and from their record of sacred authority we may safely surmise that the study of sacred epics had directly influenced Kalhana in the choice of his task."*

In tune with the demands of a true history writing , Kalhana, before undertaking the task of recoding past history of his homeland, had consulted a number of previous works left behind by his predecessors which among others include Bilhana, Mankha, Ksemendra and others. One comes across many references of poets and scholars which further testify his rich literary credentials.

Rajatarangini - A masterpiece of Medieval Historiography

Judging from the standards of medieval historiography, Kalhana occupies a status of forerunner in the art of transforming mythological basis of medieval history to the modern standards of analysis, interpretation and inquiry. In the 18th Century when modern writing of Indian history began with the colonial perceptions of the Indian past, European scholars searched for histories of India but could find none that conformed to the familiar European view of what a history should be, a view influenced in part by the thinking of the European enlightenment. The only exception according to them was the twelfth century history of Kashmir, the *Rajatarangni* of Kalhana. The art of history writing that developed in Europe during the post enlightenment era, rejected almost all chronicles written in India on the ground that they have been generally written from the standpoint of Hindu culture and civilization. *Rajatarangni* of Kalhana possesses the marked seeds of modern history writing which alongside the oral and archaeological evidences takes a serious cognizance of court records, revenue documents, edicts and inscriptions. He rightly occupies a distinctive place among Indian medieval chroniclers for divorcing the historical text from the predominant influence of religion and ritual. Stein while summing up the historical significance of Kalhana's Rajatarangni writes as under: *"In most of Hindu India we do not find historical literature in the Western sense of the word, though it is admitted that every* *ancient court had its gemologists or court poets; we have historical kavayas but they have their own source of historical information in their abundance of obscure allusion. Kashmir had from fairly early times a tradition of historical writing, which, especially with Kalhana's Rajtarangani comes nearest in character to the chronicles of Medieval Europe and of the Mohamaden East."*

The *Rajatarangni* is practically the sole extant product of Sanskrit literature possessing the character of a true chronicle as kavyas, legends, epics and the Puranas cannot be considered as history in the modern sense of the word, whatever be their value as historical sources. In the presence of Rajatarangni, the assertion of Mirza Haider Dughlat stands disqualified who in his *Tarikh-i Rashidi* writes that *"in spite of the fame of Kashmir as one of the most celebrated countries of the world no one knows anything about the present state, nor can any one of its features or history be learned from the books of former writers."* Rejecting his statement, Stein writes *'Kashmir can claim the distinction of being the only region of India which possesses an uninterrupted series of written records of its history, going back beyond the period of a* Mohamaden *conquest, and deserving the name of real chronicles."*

Associated with the field work is the study of oral traditions, which in modern times are being used seriously both by anthropologists and historians for deriving material to analyze myths and understand kinship patterns; Kalhana seems to be aware of this historical nicety, when he, alongside other established written sources utilizes different forms of oral traditions like folk-lore, legends, myths and other allied evidence for the purpose of filling gaps in his text, which otherwise, would have given a fragmented color to his connected narrative.

Kalhana belongs to that category of medieval historians, who had taken immense interest in the study of diverse sources which among other things include, the written works of earlier scholars, inscriptions recording the consecration of temples and grants of former kings, auditory inscriptions (Prassastipattas). Besides these the internal evidence of the chronicle shows that he utilizes the evidence of coins, living tradition and eyewitnesses. As a true scholar Kalhana very clearly acknowledges his scholarly debt to his predecessors like Heleraja, Rodamanmihra, Chavllakara, Surrata and Kshemendra for having benefited from their work. But what makes Kalhana distinct among his contemporaries is his interest in studying and consulting the original sources.

A historian with penetrating vision, Kalhana not only records multi-faceted incidents, developments and occurrences in almost judicious and dispassionate manner like a true historian, but the remarkable feat of Kalhana as an enlightened historian lies in the fact that he for the first time in the sub-continent discusses the philosophy of history by explaining the purpose and objective of history writing He himself puts forth the ideal in the following words, *"That noble minded (poet) is worthy of praise whose word, like that of a judge, keeps free from love or hatred in relating the facts of the past"*. Unlike court historians, he hardly conceals from us the errors and weaknesses of kings and does not hesitate to condemn the latter activities of king Harsha, to whom he had good reason to be grateful for raising his family to high office or to expose with bitter sarcasms the cowardice and empty bragging of Kashmir soldiery. To quote R.S. Pandit, *"History according to him (Kalhana) was not something to learn but something to make people live and understand life. He gives both sides of all questions and points out the faults as well as the virtues of the kings and other characters whom he describes in his history. There are no heroes or heroines; indeed whether we love them or not for their virtues, it is their vices which make them unforgettable."* There is no stereo-type description of historical characters; one finds diverse shades of a single character which makes them live, natural and colorful. Here are certain glaring examples: He praises the velour and victories of king Lallitaditya but without any hesitation mentions the fit of drunkenness in which he ordered his minister to burn the town of Parihaspora. Nor does he hesitate in mentioning all the evil ways of king Harsha, his father's patron. Susalla, Jayasimha's father though praised for his good qualities is strongly condemned for his cruel exactions and persecution of Damaras and Kayasthas. While on the one hand, Kalhana is all praise for Kashmir's feminine beauty and its scholarship, he seldom fails in his harsh criticism for their gross immorality as well. He without any reservation provides ugliest pictures of devadasis, who were often used by royal princes and kings to satisfy their sexual lust.

Despite the glaring merits of Kalhana's *Rajtarangni*, the chronicle suffers from multiple of errors particularly in terms of topography, chronology and other allied issues. Kalhana though aware of the limitations of myth and legend as a source for reconstructing the history of people living within the boundaries of a particular region, sometimes fails to draw a distinction between history and myth. In order to fill up the gaps and in an attempt to provide connectivity to the narrative, the author often takes asylum in the obscure field of religion and ritual; such attempts in the recent times have been questioned with marked proof and argument. However, in spite of these shortcomings, Kalhana's *Rajatarangni* marks a significant break from traditional history writing style prevalent in the sub-continent during the ancient times. It is not only a classic of Sanskrit poetry but is the earliest extant history of Kashmir written in the middle of the twelfth century in the age when the crusaders of Europe were fighting in western Asia.

Kalhana's masterpiece is a unique blend of authentic chronicle and imaginative poetry inspired by the poet's passionate love of his exquisitely beautiful homeland. According to R.C. Mujjumdar, *"this (Rajatrangni) is the only work in ancient Indian* *literature that may be regarded as an historical text in the true sense of the word. The author has not only taken great pains to collect his material from the existing chronicles and other sources, but, at the beginning of his work, he has set down a few general principles for writing history which are remarkably far in advance of his age. Indeed, these may be regarded as anticipating to a large extent, the critical method of historical research which was not fully developed till the 17th Century."*

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REVISITING THE *RAJATANRAGINI*

R L Bhat

History of Kashmir is mostly the account provided by Kalhana Pandit.[2] In fact, his Rajatarangini is a great torch, lighting up the historiographic scenario of not only Kashmir but the whole India. It, at the very least, is an emphatic iteration that history was not, as people generally tend to believe, something which Indians shied away from.

Ancient Traditions of Historiography

The eminence of Kalhana's work has given people the strange impression that history writing in Kashmir began in 12th century, so to say. Often it is assumed that Pandit Kalhana was its pioneer. That is, simply, not correct. *Rajatarangini* was not a twelfth century miracle. Kalhana himself says that he had as many as eleven earlier works of history before him while he wrote his magnum opus.[3] The history Kalhana wrote came from these preceding works. He was also a gifted historian. Anticipating what the historians would start doing almost a millenium later, Kalhana utilized other sources - coins, endowment records, bequeaths etc. for writing his account.

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[2] M A Stein, 1900, Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, Volumes I &II, Archibald Constable and Company Ltd, Westminster, Reprint 1989, Motilal Banarasi Das, New Delhi. (This work has been quoted as 'M A Stein, Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, Volume' while *shlookas* have been quoted as '*Rajatarangini* of Kalhana')

[3] *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana, I:11-12

Speaking of these earlier records, Kalhana says that they were of two types. One category was that of the whole histories-relating affairs from the earliest times. The other group of histories dealt only with particular periods, often the authors' own times. Thus, Kalhana had before him contemporary histories written by various authors which described the period in which those authors lived and there were other histories which presented a survey of history from earliest times. That is quite a fund of history to derive upon. In this background of the availability of histories of varied kinds, it is almost a sacrilege to situate *Rajatarangini* in 12th century alone.

Ancient Manuscripts Destroyed

Unfortunately, today we do not have those earlier records which Kalhana used and described. Sayyid Ali, author of the first Persian history of Kashmir, tells us that during the latter period of Sikandar's rule, the king came under the overwhelming influence of Sayyid Muhammad Hamdani and under his directions earlier manuscripts from all over were gathered, made into a pile and thrown into Dal Lake.[4] Sayyid Ali writes that the pile was huge, it rose high like a *minar* and that the manuscripts thus thrown into Dal Lake formed a passage across the lake to Faag area, in today's Zabarwan Hills.

Today, we have got only Kalhana's work before us and tend to see it as the beginning of history writing in Kashmir. The people, who have read Kalhana know that Kalhana's history is not a creation of 12th century and that this historical accounting in Kashmir goes back to the times and sources which had been in existence long before Kalhana, though unfortunately they got destroyed afterwards.

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[4] *Taarikhi Sayyid Ali*, Persian text, Ed. Muhammad Ibrahim, 1993, Research Deptt., J&K Government, Srinagar, page 27

Tradition of the Lost Kings

A peculiar fact of Kashmir history is the notion of 'lost kings'. Kalhana tells us that earlier historians have reported that early on in Kashmir history the names of 52 kings, their reigns and descriptions etc. were noted to be missing. Somehow, the earlier historians had not been able to find anything of these lost kings and left the period blank. The particular point supplies two signal indications. First, that before Kalhana, there had been histories and collations thereof, who had prepared lists of things from the earliest times and noted that a period and the kings ruling were missing in the records. Secondly, Kalhana tells us that historians before him had delved into the previous records and found out some names for these lost kings from those previous records, and filled them in.

Padmamihira, Chavillakara and Others

Thus, the historians, preceding Kalhana, had 'discovered' as many as thirteen of the 'lost kings'. Kalhana tells us that Padmamihira has added eight kings on the basis of Helaraja's *Parthivavali*[5] and, later, Chavillakara added five more kings.[6] Kalhana himself found four kings.[7] That includes the name Goonanda, with which the histories now begin. Altogether a total of 17 kings were added to the records, leaving 35 kings, still unknown. Though neither these works nor those of the historians who had gleaned these names are available, it become abundantly clear that Kalhana Pandit's record was not a 12th century creation, but was based on much earlier records.

In addition to these recensions, Kalhana tells us that there were other records and works of general interest, helping people in keeping track of the history. Here he speaks of

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[5] *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana, I: 17-18

[6] *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana, I: 19-20

[7] *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana, I: 16

Suvratta, who composed a concise work.[8] Kalhana is not happy with such works, which usually left out many details. He notes that these compositions became very popular giving the authors like Suvata a celebrity status, but laments the précis became the routine for the people with the result that they did not pay much attention to the details. Apparently, Kshemendra's *nripavali* was a more detailed work, but not detailed enough for a writer like Kalhana.[9] That would be half a millennium before Kalhana. It again tells us that the historical tradition of Kashmir was a very robust going far beyond Kalhana's time.

Kalhana Is Unambiguous

Kalhana is very specific in his descriptions. Of course, that is because he had explicit sources there. No wonder that the information he supplies is verifiable. On the basis of the descriptions and the accurate names provided by Kalhana, Stein has been able to identify most of the places mentioned by him. Raghunath Singh has traced over four hundred temples mentioned by Rajatarangini and has listed them, including those whose character has subsequently been changed.[10] Kalhana's genealogies, especially for the later *tarangs* stand good scrutiny.

An interesting point on accuracy of topography is about a particular place called Inderkoott. Now, Inderkoott was not the actual place. It is Jayapiddapura built by Lalitaditya's grandson, Jayapidda. Stein says that there were two areas in the palace there: one was the inner part and then there was the outer part. They were called *andarakoott* and *bahirakoott: andara* inside and *bahira* the outside. The outer area was destroyed, leaving only *andarkoott*. Later chroniclers have given the misleading name, which was only a part of the Jayaapidda's palace to the whole city he had built. Two centuries after Kalhana, the city was grand enough for Shahmir to make it his capital. It was here that Kota Devi took her last stand and was finally captured, after the Lavaniya lords changed support.

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[8] *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana, I: 12

[9] *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana, I: 13

[10] Raghu Nath Singh, *Rajatarangini* of Jonaraja, Hindi translation, Chowkhamba, Varanasi, Appendices

Kavaya Confusion

Kalhana's work is written in verse as a long poem, *kaavaaya.* That was the format used for writing in those ages when the mediums were scarce. Works were preserved and transmitted orally, both horizontally and vertically. Indeed, elaborate rules to preserve the texts and their order and fidelity during memorization had been formulated. Even the writing script has been modulated to save space on the medium. Poetry met these demands of the time and became the format for writing. It is reasonable to surmise that the preceding histories Kalhana refers to, were also in the same *shlooka* format. As it is, most of India's literature, philosophy, Shaivism, treatises on sciences, all are written in poesy, as *kavayas*. Right till the modern times, prose writing was not very well known here.

Kalhana was a poet par excellence. The latter chroniclers, like Jonaraja and Shrivara, admit the superior poetic calibre of Kalhana and lament their inability to touch that level of poesy. At the same time, Kalhana was not writing fantasy verses. Nor were any of the latter authors, who aspired to emulate his excellence, writing imaginary poems. That said, Rajatarangini is a solid source of history and none need have any confusions on its character of being a history. Kalhana and others, following in his footsteps, wrote histories of the land, based on earlier records, documents, *mahatamyas*, actual monuments, coins, land grants etc. But most importantly they wrote what they saw, providing us firsthand accounts of their times.

Format of the Age

While history, as well as philosophy and sciences got written in *shloka* format, due to the practices and constraints of the time, yet the nuances are ignored, betimes due to genuine ignorance, but as often deliberately, by the unscrupulous ones to create fancy narrations. Thus, taking in some shortcomings of Kalhana mentioned by Stein, Akhtar Mohidiin, the well-known short story writer of Kashmir, is led to denounce Kalhana in his pamphlet titled *A Fresh Approach to the History of Kashmir.*

This same incomprehension of the *kavya* character appears to have prompted Khalid Bashir to so many reckless conclusions in his *Exposing the Myth of Kashmir history.* In fact Chitralekha Zutshi is forced to say in her review of *Exposing the Myth* that "it is not a work of historical scholarship, nor should be taken as such." She goes on to add that "it is a polemic that seeks to promote a particular perspective on Kashmir history."

Sources of Kashmir History

Today, there are two types of histories of Kashmir: Sanskrit and Persian. Sanskrit histories are five, all called *Rajatarangini.* From the first by Kalhana to the last by Shuka, these are the earliest histories of Kashmir. Together they narrate the events up to middle of the 16th century CE.

Persian histories begin in the latter half of the sixteenth century. There are two classes: one those written about Kashmir, often by Kashmiris. The other is the histories of other places which happen to carry sections on Kashmir, which understandably would not be comprehensive. Towards the end of the 16th century, courtesy the attention of Akbar, the Sanskrit histories were translated into Persian, first by a Kashmiri and then rehashed by the munshi of Akbar's court. Thus, Sanskrit histories of Kashmir provide the earlier record and the Persian histories take up from the later part of the 16th century CE.

Rajatarangini of Kalhana

Rajatarangini – the river of kings – is the name that Pandit Kalhana gave to his comprehensive work, which is now the earliest history of Kashmir available to us. Though Pandit

Kalhana's family was close to the royalty – his father had been a minister during the rule of Harsha – he did not write for the ruling king, but wrote independently – 'for the readers' as Stein puts it.[11]

Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* describes the history of Kashmir from the earliest times to the mid-12th century Kashmir, when Jayasimha was the king. Written as *tarangs*, now called books, there are eight parts to the work. The first four *tarangs* deal with earlier times, and the latter four *tarangs* give the more definitive history from around the middle of the first millennium of Christian era, which is kenned as the beginning of the medieval times.

While the first six books or *tarangs* of Rajatarangini would be an exegesis of the then available earlier histories, the last two books of Rajatarangini tell of times very close to Kalhana. Here he tells us what he would have heard from his elders and what he had himself observed. In one of his concluding *shlokas,* Kalhana says that Jayasimha had been ruling for 22 years when that history was concluded. That is the last book, where Kalhana provides a contemporary account of the first half of the 12th century. Kalhana's account of 11th century is close to an eyewitness account, as he would have derived it from elders, including his father, who had lived through the preceding century.

The Second Rajatarangini

Jayasimha ruled for five more years till 1155 CE, after Kalhana's Rajatarangini was written, as we find from the next historian, Jonaraja. Unlike Kalhana, Jonaraja was an official chronicler. After attaining to kingship on his 2nd term in 1420 CE, Zain-ul Abidin appointed Shriyya Bhatta the sarvadharma adhikari, who brought in Jonaraaja to record the history.[12] This would be somewhere around circa 1430 CE, though no date has been given anywhere. Jonaraja died in 1459 CE.[13] He is wrongly assumed to have written up to his death i.e. circa 1459 CE. The actual record of history we have from Jonaraja, covers the years till the middle of the fifteenth century.

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[11] M A Stein, Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, Volume I, page 35

[12] *Rajatarangini* of Jonaraja, *sh.* 11

The Third Rajatarangini

After Jonaraja's death, Shrivara takes up the task of recording.[14] It is evident that a department of historical record-keeping had been established by sarvadharma adhikari, Shriyyabhatta, and Jonaraja wrote under the auspices of that particular department. Following him, Shrivara and others operated within that establishment.

Shrivara wrote up to 1486 CE, which is till the end of the first two-and-a-half year rule of the child king, Muhammad Shah. The last event Shrivara describes is Fatiha Shah conquering Kashmir and becoming king, for the first time. It is not known whether Shrivara died or whatever happened but his record stops there. Probably that would have been mentioned by the next chronicler, Prajyabhatta.

Sanskrit histories are Non-repetitive

An overview of the Sanskrit histories would be helpful, here. Shrivara's is the third Rajatarangini. One thing which must be mentioned regarding the Sanskrit histories of Kashmir is that these histories of Kashmir are complimentary. Written in succession, the Sanskrit historians do not speak of events described by preceding chroniclers. Kalhana had written his Rajatangini in 1149 CE. Jonaraja starts his record thereafter, describing the last five years of Jayasimha's kingship. He narrates events from 1150 CE onwards till circa 1450, covering a period of 300 years. Shrivara does not repeat whatever Jonaraja has said.

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[13] *Rajatarangini* of Shrivara, I: 1: 6

[14] *Rajatarangini* of Shrivara, I: 1: 7

After some 50 introductory shlokas, Shrivara continues the narration from where Jonaraja had left.

Eyewitness Records

The next significant aspect of the Sanskrit histories is that they are contemporary records. The chroniclers are writing of their own, detailing what they saw and knew about. As noted above, Kalhana's account of the first fifty years of 12th century is what he saw with his own eyes. His account of the 11th century is very close as he would have had contact with those who had lived through it, like his father, Champaka.

Jonaraja, after providing a summary of the two centuries after Kalhana, provides an eyewitness account of the first half of the fifteenth century from first hand observation and that of the fourteenth from those who would have lived through it. Shrivara, of course, was a firsthand witness to the three decades, which he writes of. Likewise, the Sanskrit historians following him, confined themselves to the events which the chroniclers saw with their own eyes. Thus most of the Sanskrit record is through the contemporary eyes.

The last Rajataranginis

After Shrivara we have Prajyabhatta. Like his predecessors, he wrote another continuation of Rajatarangini, under the auspices of the department of Records. Shrivara covers the 36 years up to 1486 CE. Thereafter, Prajyabhatta wrote of around 26/27 years. This is the fourth Rajatarangini. Unfortunately, that record has been lost. We learn of it, from the next chronicler, Shuka, son of Budhina. He says that Prajya Bhatta stopped writing because he feared for his life.[15] Shuka then took up the narration and continued for about a year after Muhammad Shah's death in 1536. This is evident from the fact that he tells of the first year of the rule of Mohammad Shah's son, but not of his being deposed which, the Persian histories note, happened within the year of his rule.

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[15] *Rajatarangini* of Shuka, I- 7-8

Continuous Record of Medieval Kashmir

Thus, in Sanskrit histories, from Kalhana to Shuka, we have a continuous record from earliest times in Kashmir to the middle of the 16th century, in continuity, without any overlap, without any repetition of the preceding record. None of the Sanskrit histories revisit or rewrite the previous account, or revise it in any way.

It may be noted that while Jonaraja, Shrivara and Shuka titled their works Rajatarangini, Prajyabhatta called his work RajvaliPitaka. This author believes that this difference of title may have been the reason that Prajyabhatta's work was not included in the Rajatarangini series.

One need to recognise that these were times very different from ours. Paper was scarce. Records were remembered orally. Hence the preference for kavaya. Titles grouped the works. Manuscripts were tied together. Prajyabhatta's record may not have been bound along with the rest with the result that book has unfortunately been lost. Of course, there is an alternative possibility. Shuka telling that Prajyabhatta feared for his life and stopped writing, may have created a circumstance where he actually lost his life along with the record or, at least, created circumstance in which his work was not submitted to the records department.

The period 1486-1513 CE covered by Prajyabhatta was a turbulent one. During this period, the kingship became nominal and the amirs, or warlords as we may call them today, came to rule the roost. The Shahmiri kings had been reduced to mere figureheads. This was the time when Shamsudin Araki entered Kashmir. The incessant rioting that Kashmir saw for the next hundred years, began during this period.

The Last Sanskrit Records

An interesting thing to be mentioned here is that history continued to be written in Sanskrit even at the fag end of the 16th century. It was got written on orders of Akbar. We come to know of it from the Persian translation of Rajatarangini which mentioned that the translation was ordered only for the earlier Rajatranginis and not for the part newly written.[16]

When Akbar came to Kashmir, after Mugal conquest, he was presented with the bunch of *Rajatarangini*s bound together. These included works of Kalhana, Jonaraja, Shrivara and Shuka. Akbar ordered these pristine records to be translated into Persian. At the same time, he ordered that history of the intervening period i.e. from circa 1537 when Shuka ceased his narration to 1586, when Mughals conquered Kashmir, be written too. Evidently, the department established by Shriya Bhat was still functioning, manned by the people who had been working there. Accordingly, the record requisitioned by Akbar, got written under its auspices, naturally in Sanskrit. It appears to have been written by many different writers in the department, as the account is a patchwork. These records were also appended to the Rajataranginis.

Eyewitness to Transition

As mentioned, part of this last account in Sanskrit, dating to the very end of the 16th century, is in prose, gadya, rather than in poetry, padya, and there is jumbling in arrangement of the individual parts. Yet this is a valuable record because it is the last eyewitness account in Kashmir history, in fact the only eyewitness account of the period, when the rule passed from Shahmiris to Chaks and then to Mugals. While the Persian translation of Rajatranginis did not carry this part, it was treated as a part of the Rajatarangini of Shuka by J C Dutta in his

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[16] *IntikhabiTarikhi Kashmiir*, Persian text, digital image 189

English translation of 1879.[17] Durga Prasad in his edition of the Sanskrit text, published from Bombay in 1896, included the later Rajataranginis in Volume III. He does not appear to have noted the lost work of Prajyabhatta and assigns the Rajatarangini of Shuka to Prajyabhatta and includes the last account, commissioned by Akbar, with it.[18] Shamsudin who has translated J C Dutt's English translation of the later Rajataranginis i.e. Dutt's Volume III into Urdu, also does so, though quite unknowingly.

Only Srikanth Kaul, who edited the Sanskrit text of the post-Kalhana Rajataranginis, has correctly identified it as the distinct part, as revealed by the Persian translator. He calls it the work of Annalists and includes it separately as appendices A to I in his work.[19] The account is not exactly year-wise, and shows little collation.

An interesting event is related in this record about Daulat Chak. When Merza Haidar was killed, Idi Raina of the Chaddurah house, gained power. Within the year, Daulat Chak overcame him. He ruled for the next half a decade, in mid-16th century (1551-55 CE), before the rise of Gazi Chak. In a bizarre happening, towards the end of his rule, his dwelling was getting frequently pelted with stones. Deeming it a supernatural affliction, he approached the priest at Tulmula Shrine for aid. The priest agreed to help on the condition that Daulat would cease the persecution of Pandits, which he had unleashed. Daulat refused saying that it was his religious duty. Instead of ceasing the persecution of all Pandits, he offered the priest money. The priest refused to help. Daulat got killed a little later.

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[17] *Kings Of Kashmira*, Jogesh Chunder Dutt, 1898, ELM Press, Calcutta, Volume III

[18] The *Rajatarangini of Kalhana*, ed, Durgaa Prasad, Volume III, ed. P Peterson, 1896, Government Central Book Depot, Bombay, pages 322-406

[19] Srikanth Kaul, 1966, *Rajatarangini* of Shrivara and Shuka, Sanskrit text, Vishveshvaranand Vedic Research Institute, Hoshiarpur, pages 359-428

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THE HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE OF *RAJATARANGINI*

Ghulam Nabi Atash

Translated from Urdu by Iftikhar Imran

Rajatarangini is a long Snaskrit poem composed in 7826 verses (called shlokas) by the famous Sanskrit poet Pandit Kalhana between 1148 A.D to 1149 A.D. Kalhana was a patriotic Kashmiri and he wrote Rajatarangini with two purposes in mind. One, he wanted to acquire proficiency in Sanskrit; and two, by writing the history of Kashmir he wanted to preserve it for posterity. By dint of his skill both as a poet and a historian, Kalhana accomplished the feat of writing Rajatarangini, which encompasses the history and thought of an extensive period of around five thousand years.

Kalhana was born in the last decade of the eleventh century in a Brahmin family at Parihaspur. Champak, his father, was a minister in the court of Raja Harshdev and his brother, Kanak, was a lover of music and a professional musician. Raja Harshdev made him royal musician and learnt music under his tutelage. Kalhana's family was not only on good terms with the court of Raja Harsdev but enjoyed wealth, status and respect under the royal patronage. This was the milieu that Kalhana grew up in and received formal education. Study of Rajatarangini reveals that Kalhana was deeply read in Sanskrit language and literature and was abreast of the scholarship and arts of his time. Besides scriptures and other religious texts he was well versed in poetics, economics, painting and music.

Rajatarangini, literally 'river of kings', is based on eight cantos (called tarangas). It is fundamentally an interesting depiction of the glory and military exploits of kings. Kalhana must have worked hard and spent years researching and compiling the materials for his book and then setting it out in verse. He had access to the royal archives and library, benefitted from every source and used every resource at his disposal. He had also studied every available historical, semi-historical, legendary and mythological book and every purana - be it in prose or in verse like the Nilmata Purana, Bhan Bhat's Harshacharita, Kshemendra, Padma Mahar, Cholakara and Hilaraja. To collect authentic materials Kalhana travelled the length and breadth of the country. He drew his conclusions after carefully studying his collection of ancient coins, inscriptions, deeds, edicts, and lineages. He examined ancient religious monuments and buildings which accounts for the veracity of the topographical descriptions he made eight-hundred and sixty-six years ago. Names and name origins of rivers, springs, mountains, villages, etc that Kalhana mentions have survived to this day albeit with distortions in tone or changes in dialect. For instance, Vijeshwar (Vejbyor), Kemosh (Kaimoh), Purna Adashthan (Pandrethan), Paraspur (Parihaspur), Vitasta (Vyeth), Padampur (Pampore).

The royal patronage of Kalhana's family was short-lived owing to the political instability that characterized the last days of Harshdev's (1085-1101) reign. While a civil war among his heirs weighed him down on the one hand, a revolt by the Damars shook his power on the other. After a desperate struggle to save his life moving from one place to another he died helpless and unattended. Towards the end of his reign he had devoted himself to the pursuit of pleasure rather than the welfare of his subjects.

A majority of the stories of kings in Rajatarangini comprise mythological, semi-historical and supernatural elements which makes it clear that Kalhana copiously borrowed from folklore. The stories continue to be part of Kashmir's folklore like the incident of Sati Sar which is recorded in Rajatarangini exactly as it is in Nilmata Purana. The line of thought and the style of the first part (up to Canto 4) of the book demonstrate its dependence on supernatural elements and folklore. Prominent among such stories are the killing of Mihirakula and the elephants, the founding of the city of Srinagar, the destruction of the city of Narpur, the hurling of stones from the sky by Ramniya the serpent, the incredible incident of Raja Meghvahana and the story of Raja Damodar turning into a snake.

It is true that folklore cannot replace history but it can help in bringing to light some events or epochs that have been lost in time. In the present times, the spotlight in writing history has shifted from chronicles of kings to ground realities, cultural values and sensibilities of the masses for which historians are taking recourse from folklore and oral traditions. Folklore helps in rediscovering lost histories and Kalhana has done the same in his time. Although one may not agree with all that he states or narrates, one must admit that he did exactly what he could have done a thousand years ago. He rediscovered the life histories of several kings who were lost somewhere in the past but could not lay hands on Pandit Ratnakar's Ratnakar Purana which chronicled the life stories of fifty-three kings. It was Mulla Ahmad Shah, poet, scholar and courtier of the famous Zain ul Abidin 'Budshah', who obtained Ratnakar Purana and translated it into Persian as Waqa-e Kashmir. With the passage of time the manuscript of Waqa-e Kashmir was lost until the historian Hassan Shah Koihami discovered it in Rawalpindi. The manuscript became the foundation of his four-volume Tarikh-e Kashmir in which he included the lives of the fifty-three kings of Kashmir that Kalhana has missed out on.

Overall Rajatarangini has many distinctions. For one it is the oldest genuine historical account written in the Indian continent. Subsequent histories have inevitably benefitted from it and proclaimed their debt to it. It has been translated into many languages, parts of it have been extensively cited and analyses and commentaries have been produced on it. Despite its mythological and supernatural aura its actual historical importance remains undisputed. Besides discussing the ups and downs of kings, Kalhana provides valuable facts – through allusions on occasion – about thousands of years of Kashmir's culture and traditions. Rajatarangini does not only provide information about political, social, cultural, religious and economic conditions only, it provides insights into different milieus through their architecture, sculpture, painting, dance, drama, philosophy, warfare, poetry, music and other arts and crafts. Kalhana has preserved the protests, wails and shrieks of the oppressed in addition to the strife and peace, love affairs and cuisine for generations to come. Careful study of Rajatarangini brings alive before the reader community life, armoury, military tactics, beliefs, customs and traditions, cuisine, marriage rites, bureaucracy and exploitation from many eras. The book is interspersed with deeds of women reflecting their heroism, shenanigans, wisdom and deception. Rajatarangini records that wheat and grapes were generally grown in Kashmir for their high yield and the Nagas introduced the cultivation of saffron here. Kashmiris were farmers and good craftsmen skilled in making ornaments, sewing, glass work, tannery, pottery and weaving blankets. During the reign of Raja Awantivarman (833-855) Suya took special measures to safeguard the land against floods and to ensure a constant supply of water for irrigation. Rajatarangini also mentions the races and clans who resorted to mutiny and killings or created chaos thereby giving the king sleepless nights. These included Damars, Tantrays, Lones, Nishats, Kirats, etc. The Damars were habitually rebellious and unruly.

Rajatarangini is a mine of information in which incidents demonstrating Kashmiris' courage, cowardice, generosity and justice can be found in good measure. It is evident that Kalhana drew satisfaction from versifying such incidents. He was in fact a patriot. Despite that he has impartially recorded tussles for power among kings and the wars they waged against one another, he calls Kashmiris a peace-loving people. Praising Kashmir and Kashmiris he writes:

> 'The country can be conquered by the force of spiritual merit rather than war. The inhabitants fear nothing except the Hereafter. The rivers here are free from any kind of danger or dangerous aquatic animal. In winter there are hot baths and one can enter the water conveniently through the ghats built for the purpose. Because this country was created by Suraj Kashyapa, he does not shine with much intensity in the winter to avoid inconvenience. Knowledge, high mansions, saffron, ice-cold water – things that are scarce in Paradise are a commonplace here. This land of jewels deserves to be lauded in the three worlds because even though it is located in the north it is still the land of Kuber. Here is situated the mountain range we call Gauri's Father. This is a country bounded by mountains.' (Rajatarangini, verse 39-41; Urdu translation Achar Chand Shahpuriya, 1979)

About the famous Raja Lalitaditya Muktapida Kalhana writes that his exploits were a consequence of the supernatural powers he possessed. To expand the borders of the country Lalitaditya conquered Sarandeep, Sangladeep, Gujarat, Malwa, Dwarika, Ujjain, Kabul, Khorasan, Heart, Bukhara, Samarqand, Khatan and Khoqand.

Rajatarangini contains several allusions to the Kashmiri language. Folk theatre was in vogue and popular at the time. The renowned Kashmiri expert Mohammad Yusuf Taing in his paper titled 'The Oldest Sentence in the Kashmiri Language' writes:

> Kalhana's Rajatarangini (1149) is considered the first ever book written in the Indian subcontinent. The book records an interesting incident during the reign

> of Raja Chandravarman (935-939) owing to which the first sentence of the Kashmiri language was preserved word for word. The essence of the saying in translation evidently shines through the silken veil of its Sanskrit original. It so happened that one day a musician and vocalist called Ranga brought to the court of Raja Chandravarman two beautiful girls named Hamsa and Naglata. The king, a debauchee, was so smitten with their looks that he bequeathed on Ranga the entire village of Hellu. The astonished scribe could not hold back his vexation at such an incredible gift before recording the deed, but fearing for his life wrote 'Rangas Hellu Diun'. This is Kashmiri and means 'Hellu has been granted to Ranga'. In his acclaimed and fluent translation of the Rajatarangini, R S Pandit has recorded in the footnote that this is perhaps the earliest extant sentence in the Kashmiri language. The village in question is situated on the Shopian-Bijbehar road some ten kilometers from Shopian, and is even today known as Hellu.' (Kashmir Qalam, Mohammad Yusuf Taing, pp 314-316; Rajatarangini, verse 397,398,400,401)

Rajatarangini has been translated into many languages. During the reign of King Zain ul Abidin 'Budshah' a portion of the book was translated into Persian as Bahr ul Asmar (The Sea of Stories). The renowned European scholar, linguist and researcher Sir Aurel Stein (born 26 November 1862 at Budapest, Hungary) translated Rajatarangini into English along with a reliable scholarly commentary. Among other notable translations are R S Pandit's English translation and Sabir Afaqi's Persian translation. Ranjit Singh, brother-in-law of Pandit Jawahalal Nehru, has also translated Rajatarangini into English. Thakur Achar Chand Shahpuriya's Urdu translation was published in 1989. The Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages enlisted the services of experts which included Arjan Dev Majboor, Prof

Bashar Bashir, Syed Rasool Pompur, Dr Muzafar Ahmad Khan and Zafar Muzafar whose painstaking and dedicated efforts finally led to the publication of a complete translation of Rajatarangini.

The historical importance of Rajatarangini cannot be denied, in fact its value is both historical and esoteric. In spite of several omissions and pitfalls the book has been considered a source or primary material. But it must be said that Kalhana has not mentioned his contemporary Buddhist scholars and even ignored Abhinavgupta. Let alone provide the details, he has not even mentioned in passing the International Buddhist Council held during the reign of Raja Kanishk. After Kalhana, Jonaraja and Shrivara wrote books comparable with Rajatarangini but among all these books Rajatarangini has commanded the highest stature.

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DĀRVA-ABHISĀRA AND RĀJATARAƊGINĪ

A Study in Place Names

Dr Lalit Gupta

Dārva-Abhisāra as a Region: About t.he historical geography of Dārva-Abhisāra (present-day Jammu division of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir), we have to define the region first. Though it is assumed to be clearly defined, there has been no unanimity among historians, scholars and other social scientists about the space called Dārva-Abhisāra. They have generally taken a politico-administrative unit for granted, but not the same one.

The territorial boundaries of this geographical region Dārva-Abhisāra can be roughly located westward of river Ravi and eastward of river Jhelum with river Chenab transecting the land. It shared its western borders with Madra Deś (Sialkot), Gandāhra- Kashmir (Kāśmir) on the north-west, Audumbara (Pathankot), and Trigarta (Kangra) on the southeast.

Bordering the northern plains of Punjab, the outermost hills rising from the Himalayas called Śivalik/Shiwaliks in this area stretch from Himachal Pradesh to the Pothowar in Pakistan. The foothills of the Pir Panjal are about 240 kilometres long and start from Kishtwar in the east and go up to Muzzafrabad in the west.

The region "covers all areas lying on the south of the Pir Panjal mountain ranges such as the entire Jammu province, Himachal's Bilaspur, Chamba, Kangra, Kullu, Mandi, Suket, Una, Hamirpur, areas of Punjab like stretches of Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, and some areas of Pakistan such as tehsils of Zafarwal, Shakargarh, and some parts of Sialkot." (Ved Ghai-1985)

The range on the eastern side has been named the Chenab Valley area. "Among the chief highland side valleys of Chenab in Jammu, major ones are valleys of Padar, Dacchan and Marwa in Kishtwar, Bhales, Bhadarwah, Siraj and Banihal in Doda, Poonch and Rajouri and Anji in Reasi. All these mountain valleys of Chenab and its tributaries have rich antiquity".[1]

This goes to say that Dārva-Abhisara as a region was not undifferentiated and it encompassed varying sub-regions and localities. Wherever these localities came together they led to the shaping of the sub-regions, the latter coalescing in the making of a region.

An integral part of pan-Indian civilization and culture and an important buffer and peripheral zone, Dārva-Abhisāra had acted as a trade and commercial link between the Indian mainland and Central Asia via Kashmir Valley since ancient times. As a regional entity, the region was subject to the overarching pan-Indian political, social and cultural developments that shaped polity and life in the region.

An alternative view is the process of the development of the region as sui generis. In economy, society, polity, language, literature, artistic style, sculptures, and architecture—in almost every field—the regions start coming of age. In roughly the second half of the first millennium of the CE, give or take a couple of centuries here or there.

Jammu in Ancient Literary Sources: In Jammu and Kashmir in general and the Jammu region in particular, there is a paucity of inscriptions from the early historic as well as the medieval period.[2] With the result, the native researchers such as Jagdish Chandra Sathe, Ved Kumari Ghai, Bal Krishan Sashtri and Sat

Pal Shrivatsa, have mainly focused upon Vedas and Purāṇas and works of grammar in order to scrap out details about the historical geography of Jammu.

While Ved Kumari Ghai's focus has been the Nīlamata Purāṇa in particular and Kashmir Sanskrit literature in general, it was Jagdish Chander Sathe who did a comprehensive study of Vedas, particularly Rig Veda and Purāṇas in terms of geographical features like rivers and mountains and their possible location in Jammu area. Whereas Sat Pal Shrivatsya focused upon Purāṇas to pinpoint references about Madra, the region contiguous to Dārva-Abhisāra.[3]

Jagdish Chander Sathe's pivotal research locates the Jammu region's rivers, places and legendary characters mentioned in Vedas and then goes on to connect these with the names of the modern-day places in Dārva-Abhisāra. Interestingly, some of the historic places of Dārva-Abhisāra identified by Sathe, for their association with the life stories of legendary characters and personalities of Vedic India, continue to appear in umpteen versions in Purāṇas and later Sanskrit literature.

Dārva-Abhisāra in Mahābhārata, Purāṇas and other Literary Sources: It is in the Mahābhārata that the term Dārva-Abhisāra gets its proper description as the area inhabited by Dārva and Abhisāra tribes. Mentioned in the geographical description of various tribes given by Bhiṣma, in the Bhiṣma Parrva, (Mahābhārata), the compound word of Dārva-Abhisāra, also appears as separate terms in Mahābhārata as Darva, (II.24.17),(II.48.12), (III.174.12),(VI.10.53), (VIII.51.18) and as Darvīka, (VI.10.53). Dārva is the name of a tribe mentioned as inhabiting the region around ancient Kashmīra. Mahābhārata's Samaparva mentions tribes (jātiyān) of Dārva and Audambaras, who had given gifts to Yudhistara. The coins of the Audmabaras have been discovered in the vicinity of Pathankot located on the right bank of Ravi. Panini's Aṣṭadhayī makes mention of Madra and its two streams Uddha (mod. Ujjh) and Bhiddha (mod. Beyi).

Viṣṇudharmottaram, Vāyu, Matsya, Vāman and other purāṇas mention Ravi, Chenab, and Devikā streams flowing in the region. Viṣṇudharmottaram describes that Gandharva had harassed the king Yudhajitu. He prayed to Lord Rama for help who sent Bharata to the Kekeya deśa. Bharata left Ayodhya, crossed the Ganga and Yamuna and reached Kurukshetra. Proceeding further and crossing Satluj, Vyas and Ravi reached the banks of the Devikā stream. According to the earliest references from ancient literary sources, the above-mentioned region is mentioned as Udichya Madra, Kekaiya, Kaluta, Bahika (Bāhlika), Dārva-Abhisāra (Ved Ghai-1985).

Rivers of Dārva-Abhisāra in Ancient Sanskrit Literature: Vedas mention Śadurdi (Satluj), Bipasha (Vias), Asikini (Chenab), and Paruśani (Ravi). Marudadha is also mentioned which is identified as Marubadharn which flows in Kishtwar. The above rivers are also mentioned in Purāṇas. Pāṇini's mention of the Devikā, Ujjah, Ravi, and Bein rivers, confirms his intimate knowledge of the Madra Deśa (the area contiguous to Duggar of today). Reasi's Anji River and Sanasar also find mention.

Dārva-Abhisāra, since ancient times due to its unique buffer position between mainland and Kashmir, boasted of connected histories with the neighbouring as well as distant lands. From the founding accounts of Jammu city by scions of the Raghu clan from Ayodhya, the cultural continuum in Dārva-Abhisāra speaks of intercultural exchange with the rest of the Bharata. From being the northernmost outpost of Saraswati-Sindhu Valley Civilization, sharing borders with Janapadas such as Trigarta, Madra, Gandhāra and Kashmir, the region along with Indigenous beliefs of shamanism and animism, was exposed to the religio-social philosophies of Vedic Grah-Sutras and Kalpa-Sutras, the tenets of Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Shaktism, Buddhism, Jainism, on the one hand, and the development and legacies of the Bharatiya aesthetic and material culture and its technologies, on the other.

Medieval Sanskrit texts, *Nilmata Purana* (6th-7th century CE) and *Rājataraŋginī* (1045-1110 CE), emanating from Kashmir, have emerged as pivotal sources of information about the spiritual, socio-cultural beliefs, rituals, arts, architecture and varied aspects of lifestyle of the people, along with topography, the place names of the Valley as well as of the contiguous regions.

Dārva-Abhisāra and Nilmata Purāṇa: *Nīlamata Purāṇa* is an important source of the ancient history of Kashmir. Along with other details about the myriad aspects of life in Kashmir, it also makes a few mentions of the contiguous areas with which Kashmir had political and cultural relations. In the areas lying south of Pir Panjāl, The *Nīlamata Purāṇa* makes mention of Dārva-Abhisāra for the first time in reference "to the story of demon Jalodbhava, born in the waters and reared by the Nāgas. Having obtained boons from Brahmā, the demon began to destroy the descendants of Manu dwelling in the lands of Dārva-Abhisāra, Gandhāra, Juhundara, Śakas, Khaśas, the Taṅgaṇas, the Maṇḍvas and the inhabitants of Antragiri and Bahirgiri etc. Seeing this devastation, Nila approached his father Kaśaypa who had reached Kankhala in connection with his pilgrimage to all the sacred places of the earth, and requested him to visit the tīrthas of Madra and Himvān."[4] *Nilamata Purāṇa* also refers to the following rivers and a mountain range of Dārva-Abhisāra:

Āpagā: Among the 65 rivers enumerated by Nilmata Purāṇa, Āpagā is mentioned in the list of the Tirthas of Madra and Himvān, and may be identified with the river Ayuk (Aik) rising in Jammu hills, to the north-east of Sialkot.[5]

Candrabhāgā: Mentioned in verses 116, 117, 120, 121, 154, and 1055 in the Nīlamata Purāṇa, it seems to be the Cinab which flows southeast of Kaśmira and forms a boundary of Darva-Abhisara. Reaching Kishtawar from a northwest course it turns to the southeast, at Junglewar it turns to the west and at Arnas it again flows southward past Riasi to Akhnur. It enters the Panjab at Khairi Rihal in the Sialkot district of West Punjab (Pakistan).[6]

Devikā: The Nilmatā regards Devikā as an incarnation of Umā and locates it in Madra i.e. between Ravi and Cinab.[7] The Mahābhārta, Padma Purāṇa, Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa, Matsya Purāṇa, Amarkośa, Bṛahat Saṃhitā, Aṣṭadhyāyī and the Mahābhāṣya refer to this river.[8]

Tauṣī: Prof Buhler regards Tauṣī as the ancient form of the present-day term Tohī used for several mountain streams joining the Vitastā and the Candrābhāgā from the south slopes of Pir Paňjal range.[9] The Tauṣī of Rājataraṅgiṅi VI. 53, is identified with the Tohī of Puňcha.[10] Two Tohīs, one in the province of Jammu and the other in Naushera, are tributaries of Cinab.[11] The Tohī mentioned in Nilamatā seems to be the Tohī of Jammu province which takes rise immediately above Sudha Mahādeva and enters into Cinab near Sialkot.[12]

Paňcāladhārā: "Mentioned by Kṣmendra (Samaya Mātṛka, Samaya, 11, v.92), Paňcāladhārā is unknown to Nīlamata Purāṇa but it extols three high peaks named after Brahmanā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara, to the west of Banahal."

Uśikara: Mentioned in Nīlamata Purana, Uśikara is referred to as the 'best of the mountains– in Darva". The reference appears in verse 1001, which reads "O best of among the Nāgas, having banished him from here, I allowed to him a place on Uśikara— best in Dārva" (Ghai, 1994). The mountain, a Nāga tirtha is yet to be identified in the Jammu region. It is, however, associated as the tirthas of Shandgula Nāga, in Hills of Shivalik range, south of Kashmir."[13]

Dārva-Abhisāra and Kalhaṇa's Rājataraṅgiṅi: Pandit Kalhaṇa's 11th-century Sanskrit chronicle written in Kashmir, apart from being a unique account of the history and culture of Kashmir, also reveals umpteen details about spiritual and socio-cultural linkages and continuities of the people and regions that not only surround it but also far and wide.

Rājataraṅgiṅi is also a valuable source for the medieval history of the Jammu region whose roots grew under the overarching empires of north India and which made a significant contribution to the development of its culture. The spread of the Vedic and Pauranic culture of the Sanskrit-speaking north Indians took place during regimes of related-by-blood Rajput dynasties which ruled small principalities that had emerged after the disintegration of the Gupta Empire within Jammu and the contiguous Himachal Pradesh. These include Pruntsa (Poonch), Lohokote (Lohrain) and Rajapuri (Rajouri) in Abhisara. There are also numerous mentions of Kāśṭavaṭa (Kishtawar), Vallāpura (Billawar-Basohli), Bhadravkśa (Bhadarwah), Khasha, Dārva-Abhisāra and Babbapura."[14]

Interestingly, like many ancient literary texts, Rājataraŋginī has ingrained information about topography. Its list of place names reveals an entire gamut of feature names such as natural and cultural: water features, places of natural vegetation growth;

mountain ranges, passes, names of regions, sub-regions, capital cities, towns, villages, forts, sacred places, confluences, tirthas etc.

Rājataraŋginī, not only faithfully records place names of Kashmir and Dārva-Abhisāra, but also highlights the process of Sanskritization and then of Prakrit place names which might have begun by the 5th century CE. The Sanskrit influence in place names in Kashmir is seen in names such as Sopore (Suyyapura), Baramulla (Varahamula), and Harwan (Shadharvana). Similarly, in Jammu, the place names like Pukharni (Pushkarni), Ghara (Agharhara), Basohli (Vishvasthali), Mool Sthana (Doda) attest to Sanskrit's presence in the region.

The use of such place names might have been prevalent in the administrative work and in the activities of the elites. Along with Sanskritization of Prakrit names, Prakritization of Sanskrit names or suffixes was also taking place. For instance, after the 9th century the Sanskrit suffix Pura was Prakritized as 'or', and as a result, the local name with the Sanskrit suffix 'pura' such as Babbapura became Babbor. This is attested by their modern Dogri version wherein the ancient Sanskrit Names of Babbapura and Vallapura stand transformed into Babor and Ballor/Billawar respectively.

Rājataraŋginī (RT) and Ancient Place Names of Dārva-Abhisāra (Alphabetical List)

Abhisāra: The land of Abhisāras or Abisares. Mentioned in Greek sources as famous people who held Assakenoi in offering resistance to Alexander but later on made an alliance with Alexander who confirmed their ruler under the title of

Ksatrapa.[15] Abhisāra is identified with the hills between the Jhelum and the Chenab, corresponding with parts of present-day Poonch, Rajouri.

Attalika/Atalika: The ancient town. of Atalika was in Lohara (Poonch). It was a considerable settlement, two kilometres from Mandi on a hill. Atalika was founded by Raja Jayasimha. Rājataraṅgiṇī mentions it as Attalika town in Lohara. "When King Sushala (1112- 1120) had gone to the small town (puri) Attalika". The market of Attalika is specially mentioned in RT (viii 1991). This place has been identified by Stein with the present Atoli, some eight miles below Loharin or Lohara. The present town of Atoli is located in Mandi Tehsil of Punch district in Jammu & Kashmir. It is situated 5km away from sub-district headquarters Mandi and 14km away from district headquarters Punch. Lying close to Atoli, the Village Mandi is now the commercial centre of the district and could fittingly be called a market town.

Babbāpura: The ruler of 'Babbāpura' is mentioned in RT; vii. 538 in the list of seven rajas from the hills to the south of Kashmir, who had assembled in King Kalasha's court in 1087/88 CE. The names of rulers of Campā (Chamba), Vallāpura, Kāśṭavaṭa, (Kishtawar), Nilapura, Trigarta, Vartula, also find mention. There is also a mention of a Babbāpura princess having married a Kashmiri king.

Babbapura was the ancient capital of Dogras. Presently known as Manwal (also Babour), it is located about 38 kilometres north-east of Jammu. In the 10th and 11th centuries, this important urban settlement came to be adorned with more than 15 temples, out of which presently only seven temples are standing in different conditions of repair. The archaeological excavations by Srinagar Circle of ASI, have revealed that there was in ancient times a large town at this place. The excavations have exposed layers of settlement patterns right from the Kuṣhāna period onward, thus confirming the antiquity of the place as early as the 1st -2nd century CE.

Baddivās: Modern village of Būdil/ Buddhal, located near Rajouri, is mentioned as Baddivās in Rājataraŋginī. It was a well-known village situated to the south of Pir Panstal on one of the upper tributaries of the Ans River. It has given its name to a pass over the range and to a once much-frequented mountain route. It gained prominence due to its association with Tunga, who was chief minister of Rani Didda (c. 924 CE – 1003 CE).

Bāhusthali: The name occurs in RT, I, Book VIII, verse 1844, as Bāhusthali in connection with the Lohara expedition of King Jaysiṁha of Kashmir undertaken in 1130 CE. The verse informs us that "Sura, the chief of Bāhusthali to whom King Sussala has previously given Padmalekha, the daughter of Laṭhana, in marriage……… Who had arrived to assistance of his father-in-law". Laṭhana, who had been imprisoned at the Lohara fort, was released by the people. The Raja of Bāhusthali went to his aid when the Kashmir armies mobilized against him in 1130 CE. The ruling houses of Dogra country, including those of Babbāpura (Jammu) and Vallāpura (Balaur–Basohli) intermittently played roles in Kashmir politics. The Rājataraṅgiṅi mentions these two rulers supporting Bikshāchara's claim for the throne of Kashmir. At that time Vajradhāra, also called Chakradhāra was Raja of Babbāpura. It can, therefore, be conjectured that Śura, the chief who went to assist Laṭhana, may have belonged to the Dogra group, and if so Bāhusthali may be identified with Bāhu of Dogra annals, and Śura was probably a sāmant of that place which was a fief of the Babbāpura (Jammu) state. But all this is highly conjectural and open to objections unless corroborated by further evidence. (Gulabnma, Eng Tr. By SDS Charak)

Bāṇaśāla: RT mentions Bāṇaśāla, as the castle that guarded the route to Kashmir from the southern slope of Pir Pañjal. In the course of time, it came to be called Banihal. It marks the easternmost route to Kashmir via the Banihal pass, which, owing to its comparatively small elevation (9,000 ft.), must always have been a convenient route of communication towards the upper Chenab Valley and the Eastern Punjab hill States. The Castle of Banaśāla which guarded this route was in the hands of a Khasa chief in the twelfth century. During Jayasimha's reign (1120-49), the rival claimant Bhiksacara planned his invasion of Kashmir through this pass. As per folklore, the town was based on 12 villages (hāls); Jāchāhāl, Jināhal, Haniza hāl, Karālchi, Parhinderhāl, Chamhāl, Talāhāl, Barnehāl, Akhandhāl, Mitalhāl, Tajanihāl, and Dag Hāl. As per another local legend, Bahihāl is named after twelve Nalās which flow here. These are Danād Nāla, Nougaam Nāla, Jabankhaar Koṭ Nāla, Lanmbar Nāla, Jarel Nāla, Asharkot Nāla, Karodhe Janjali Nāla, Dailgam Bankot Nāla, Ambkot Nāla, Chanbaluās Nāla, Neel-par-Hinder Nāla, Mahumngat Nāla, Kharosh Targam Nāla, Subard Raamsu Nāla, and Maggarkot-Pogal Nāla. There is a tradition to name places after the number of Nālas that flow. Such as the area of 22 Nālas in the Reasi district is named Bimhaag. As per the account of Tasvir-E-Doda by Zardar, Banihal's old name was Deb-gole, as it was the residence of a Dev amidst a thick jungle (Deol in the local language). The place was under the control of the Kashmir ruler. In the 16th century when Chakks became weak, the raja of Kishtwar established his rule here.

Bhadrāvakaśa (Bhadarvāha): The hill district of Bhadavāh lower down on the Cenāb is once named in the Rajataraṅgiṇī as Bhadravakāśa as the place of retreat of an exiled noble Sahasramangala during the reign of Sussala (note viii 501). In Bhadravakāśa, we have undoubtedly the old name of the hill district now known as Bhadarvāh which is situated to the south of the Cenāb and adjoins Kiśtavār.

BK Kaul Dembi also supports Steins' view as he says: Bhadrāvakāśa is the ancient name of the hill district now known as Bhadarvaha, in Jammu division of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. It is situated 190 kilometres from Jammu and 96 kilometres from Chamba. According to Stein, it appears to have been a dependency of Chamba in ancient days as it was in recent centuries since rulers of Bhadarvaha are no longer referred to in Kalhaṇa's list of hill rajas.

Some historians say that it was founded by Bharadapal, a prince of Vallāpura; some associate its name with the name of local guardian goddess Bhadrakaali. As per Fredrick Drew, it is also known as Bhadrakashi. During the Dogra rule, it was called Bhadar-wal. (Nirmohi)

Campā (Chamba): The Raja of Campa/Campā, figures often in RT. "The territory has since early times comprised the valleys of the sources of Ravi between Kangra, the ancient Trigarta, and Kāśṭavaṭa. The ancient Rajput families which rule this hill state to the present day, often intermarried with the Lohara Dynasty which reigned in Kashmir (Stein, RT, I, 432).

Dārva-Abhisāra: "The combined names of Dhārvas and Abhisāras are mentioned in various ethnographical lists, furnished by Mahābhārata, the Purāṇas and Bṛhat Saṃhitā, along with those of tribes belonging to Punjab."[16] Stein quotes from RTK Book 1, p. 30. Canto 173 "Then the fearless king Abhimanyu, -----became king----"and again another reference is from Book 1, p. 32. Canto 180----"As the deep snow was falling every year to cause distress to Bauddhas, the king (Abhimanyu-I) resided for six months in the cold season in Dārva-Abhisāra and the other (neighbouring regions)."

Kāmbuva: The number of names of watch stations on the Pir Panjal route has been mentioned in Rajatarangini. The name of the watch station Kāmbuva figures in RT iii.227. II 292.

Karkotadranga: It was the name of the watch station on the Toshmaiadan route to Kashmir from the Poonch side (RT, vii. 140, ; viii. 1596, 1997, ; II .291., 309).

Kālañjara: Presently known as Kotli, this ancient city of Chibbhal is 180 kilometres from Jammu and is under the occupation of Pakistan. The Poonch River flows by it. Other rivers of the area are Jhelum, Ananti, Rangaar, and Neel. Kotli is mentioned as Kālañjara in Rajatangini's VII book, about Raja Kaleh and his daughter Megh Manjari. In the VIII book of Rājataraŋginī, its ruler is named Padamrath. In the Moughal sources, it is called Kalanajr. In 1785 the Raja of Poonch Ali Gohar, after getting control of Kalinhar Fort, named the place Kot Ali, which later became popular as Kot-li. From time to time controlled by Rajas of Poonch and Bhimbar, the area was won over by Sikh Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Khalsa Sarkar in 1827 and was given as jagir to Raja Dhiyan Singh. From 1845 onward Gulab Singh made it part of his kingdom and since 1947, it has been occupied by Pakistan.[17]

Kānda: A Raja of Kanda is referred to in RT; vii. 1345, as well as a route of Kanda' in viii 538. No clear indication of this country is available as to the position of this territory. But as in the last-named passage, Kanda seems to be spoken on the way from Bhadravkśa to Kashmir, it may be conjectured that Kanda was the name of one of the hill districts immediately to the south-east of Kashmir.

Kāśṭavat:_ The present hill district of Kishtwar in the valley of the upper Chinab, lies to the southeast of Kashmir. It is mentioned by Kalhaṇa as a separate hill state in the time of King

Kalsha (r. 1063-89 CE). The rajas of Kāśṭavaṭa who were Hindus till Aurangzeb's time practically retained their independence until the conquest of their territories by Gulab Singh in 1821. Kishtwar has been known by many names in the past such as Kant Vat; Samath Garh; Govardhansar; Sarkot ka Sarovara; Mahakalgarh; Lohita Mandala; Pohi, from Pohal, the grazers; Bhot Nagar, as it was ruled by Gyalpo from Suru valley and also from its founder the Kishta Rishi. "The fort of Kishtwar was one of the most important forts in the Chinab valley area and hills of Kishtwar to check the advancement of the Mughal army. It is understood that the present fort was built during the 17th-18th century CE by the successors of Raja Kahn Sen, the founder of Kishtwar state."[18]

Khaśālaya Khasali/Khasal (now Khaiśaal): The country of Khaśas was in the south of Kashmir and extended from "Kastwar in the south-east to the Vitasta (Jhelum) in the west" (RT vii 399) and it included the hill states of Rajpuri (Rajauri) and Lohara (Punch). The Khaśas are identical to present-day Khakas (RT, vol II, Ancient Geography of Kashmir, p 430, and Markendeya Purāṇa, Ch 57). Khasali, leads from the Marbel pass, in the south-east corner of Kashmir, down to Kishtwar. Rajouri and Poonch were once included in the Kashmir region before these came to be named Chibhal. The Khasali tract proper lies in the hills north and east of Rajouri.

Loharkot: Lohara/Loharin/ Loren: The ancient capital of Loharkot/ Loharakotta, the present-day Loren is situated 34 kilometres north of Poonch city, and 10 kilometres northeast of Mandi town. The historic settlement of Loren is mentioned in Rajātaraṅgīni as a territory of Lohara which is situated in the northwest of the ancient state of Rajapuri and was one of its chief valleys. The Lohara fort at Loran played a major role in the political history of Poonch and Kashmir. The place shot into prominence and became important for Kashmir from the end of the tenth century onwards when Didda, a princess of its ruling family obtained the Kashmir throne. Raja Sangharaja (r.950-958 CE) made Lohara as his capital. It was during the rule of his descendants that Mehmood Gaznavi attacked Poonch in 1014 and 1021 CE, but couldn't get hold of the strategic fort and had to forego his dream of conquering Kashmir. Loharkot came under the control of Kashmir's Sultan Zain-Allah-ud-Din in 1452, and he installed his son Hazi Khan as its ruler. In 1594, when Mughal Prince Salim appointed Siraj-ul-Din as chief of Lohara, he shifted his capital to the Poonch. Lohara thus lost its importance and was reduced to a small village over time.

Madivadvan: Madivadvan, the Maru-Wadwan of maps finds mentions in RT, II 435-409.

Madra: Kalhana while mentioning the territories bordering Kashmir, refers to the character of their people in R Book viii 1531. The territories referred to are Madra, Trigarta and Darva-Abhisara. Madra, one of the solasmahajanpadas, with capital at Sialkot, finds prominent mention of Mahabharata. It was home to the Madra tribe or the Madrakas. Kalhaṇa, as such makes no mention of Madra Desha. He only mentions Upar Madra as Dārva Abhisāra.

Naggarkot: The Nagarkot fort in Kangra is mentioned in RT, v, 143-144. Kalhaṇa also notes that Trigarta and Upper Satluj valley areas were under the rule of Kashmir in the 9th century CE. When Kashmiri king Shankarvarman in the 9th century led an expedition to conquer Gurjara, he was opposed by Trigarta's chief Prithvi Chandra. Since early times, Kangra and Himachal Pradesh in general had politico-cultural connections with Kashmir.

Nīlapura: Not identified. Kirtiraja is referred to as the ruler of Nilapura(RT; vii 582 and Vol I. VII 582 .p. 314). Kalsha (1063-1089), the king of Kashmir received (in marriage), Bhavanamati, the daughter of Kirtiraja, lord of Nialpura. This sub-region has not been identified by historians.

Praoṇtsa/Prūnts: The main urban centre of the old Abhisāra, the modern-day Poonch has been known in past with several names Puancha/Punach /Praoṇtsa/Prūnts. The region of Poonch along with Rajauri and Abhisāra has witnessed many historical eras. Beginning with the 326 BC invasion of Alexander, this region was known as DārvaAbhisāra. In the 6th Century AD, the famous Chinese traveller "Huien Tsang described Puanch as bounded on the west by Jhelum, on the north by Pir Panjal range, and on the east and southeast by the small state of Rajaori". In the seventh century, Paunch was subject to Kashmir. According to Rājataraŋginī, Raja Trilochanapala of the Poonch area gave a tough fight to Mehmood Ghaznavi who invaded this area in 1020 CE. Lohara fort at Loran played a major role in the political history of Poonch and Kashmir. Lohara dynasty from Poonch ruled Kashmir. But in later times it had a chief of its own, whose descendants were put to death by Gulab Singh of Jammu and this small sovereignty came under Kashmir. At the time of Partition, Poonch was called as Poonch Jagir and had four tehsils namely Haveli, Mendhar, Palandari, and Bagh.

Rājapuri: It was the old name of the hill territory now known as Rajauri. It lies to the south of the central parts of the Pir Pantsāl range and comprises the valleys which are drained by the Tohi of Rajauri and its tributaries. Its modern Kashmiri name is Rāzvīr. In the times of Hieun Tsang (633-635 CE), Rājauri was subject to Kashmir. Rajauri took its name from its capital which is repeatedly mentioned by Kalhaṇa, and undoubtedly occupied the position of the present town of Rajauri.[18] Its ruling family belonged to Khasa tribe. Its descendants were converted Muslim Rajput chiefs who retained the territory down to the present day.

"Rajauri was the most important of the hill states in the Dārva-Abhisāra. Owing to its position on the most direct route to Punjab, Rajapuri was necessarily often brought into political relations with Kashmir. From the tenth century onwards we find the chiefs of Rajauri as practically independent rulers, though the Rājataraŋgini tells us of numerous expeditions undertaken into their territory by later (Kashmiri) kings.[19] "The district of Rajaori is nearly a square of 40 miles on each side bounded on the north by Pir Panchal, on the west by Punach, on the south by Bhimber, and the east by Riasi and Aknur. By extending its boundary on the east to the Chenab, and on the south to the plains, it would include all these petty places; even then its frontiers would not be more than 240 miles, or by road about 320 miles. In the fifteenth century, the Hindu family was disposed in favour of the Muslim king of Kashmir, and his descendent was so reduced by Gulab Singh that in 1846 he was glad to accept an estate in the British district of Kangra in exchange of his chiefship of Rajaori.

After taking the charge of Rajouri from Raja Faqir Ullah in 1846, Maharaja Gulab Singh changed the name of Rajouri to Rampur. But the name did not become popular and natives continued to call it Rajouri.[20]

Rajpura Mandi: Situated near the Sangam (confluence) of rivers Poonch and Purnoi, it was an adjunct settlement of Loharkot which for four and more months was covered with snow. Since the ruling family moved to this place in winter, it was known as Rajpura. Over time, it became a centre of trade and came to be called Rajapura Mandi. Located on the foot route to Kashmir, it was an important halting place for all those intending to go to Kashmir including Mehmood Gaznavi to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who used the place as their base camp. The famous pilgrimage of Buddha Amaranth is only two kilometres from Rajapura mandi.

Vallāpura: The old principality of Vallpura finds repeated mention in RTK. Its original name Vallapura may be due to the presence of a large number of Ballava trees in the area in ancient times. It was the capital of the old principality of Vallpur, Jammu, which is said to have been founded by Raja Bhog Pal in the 8th century CE. Its earliest reference comes from Rājataraŋginī in the reign of Ananatadeva of Kashmir (1028-63 CE). Raja of Vallapura figured in the list of kings who about 1050 CE, had gone to Kashmir to pay homage to Ananatadeva's heir, his son Kalasha (1063-89). There were matrimonial relations of Vallapura with the royal houses of Kashmir. Billawar referred to as Balaur by Alberuni, had developed as an important trade centre in the 9th–10th centuries CE and a temple was constructed either by the trade guilds of the place or the ruling family was in a position to provide proper monetary support to its construction The vanshavali of Billawaria kings account for the rulers of Billawar from 1169 to 1590. It was around 1630 when the capital of this ancient principality was shifted to Basohli, 55 kilometres away in the eastern direction and situated on the right bank of Ravi.

Vartula: Modern day Gool was the capital of the state of 'Vartula' (RT, viii 287). The Kashmiri king Sussala had married Jajjala, daughter of Vartula Chief Sahajpal. When Sufi saint Baba Farid-ud-din, during a trip had come here, the Vartul's chief Raja Lakshman Rai, not only hosted him and adopted Islam, but also married his daughter to him. Vartul rajas were under the rule of Kishtwar in the 16th Century. In the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Gulab Singh, the Vartuala chiefs were mentioned as 'Rai'. Vartula was later named as Deeng Battal. Some scholars consider Sangaldaan as the chief town of Ding Battal, while some consider Cchaccharu and Thathāraka. Ghoḍa Gali is an important place in Gool. It is famous for ancient stone sculptures/memorials of horse riders. The hot springs of Sangāldān attract a lot of people suffering from joint pain. (Nirmohi) A place in Gool, called Ghodha Gali, is of archaeological importance for quite a large number of memorial stones. These consist of large stone horses with two to three riders atop. Strewn all around the place, there are also freshwater springs with stone walls engraved with human and animal figures and geometrical patterns.

Viṣālāta: The name of Viṣālāta finds its first mention in Kalhana's Rājataraŋginī; "Immediately at the foot of Banihal pass in the territory of Viṣālāta we find the castle of 'Khaśa lord' who gave shelter to Bhikṣācara and at that time was independent (RT Book 1, p. 30. Canto 173). "Then the fearless king Abhimanyu, -----became king----- ----As the deep snow was falling every year to cause distress to Bauddhas, the king (Abhimanyu-I) resided for six months in the cold season in Dārva -Abhisāra and the other (neighbouring regions) (RT Book 1, p. 32. (Canto 180)

Postscript: Although in Rājataraŋginī there are several references to the military and matrimonial interaction between Dārva-Abhisāra and Kashmir Valley, a systematic study is still awaited to assess the extent and importance of the role the region which lays in the south of Valley may have played, intermittently or otherwise, in the socio-political and cultural life of Kashmir. The analytical study of the context in which the place names of Dārva-Abhisāra find mention in Rājataraŋginī may be a stepping stone to weave a picture of the interaction between Dārva-Abhisāra and Kashmir through time.

(The author is a renowned researcher and literary theorist, based in Jammu.)

POET IN FOCUS

PROF SHASHI PATHANIA

Translated from Dogri by Suman K Sharma

Prof Shashi Pathania (born, 1955) holds a doctorate in Dogri. She retired as professor of Dogri, University of Jammu. Her extensive research experience covers Grammar, Linguistics, Translation, Literature and Folklore. Creative writing came to her as a welcome consequence of her academic pursuits. She started writing in Dogri in the year 1984 and has written prolifically in various genres of Dogri including short story, poetry, linguistics, literary criticism, etc. She has three published works to her credit in Dogri: one collection of articles on literary criticism and two translations from Punjabi into Dogri; in addition to several short stories published in various magazines and journals. Prof Shashi Pathania has been honoured with the Sahitya Akademi Translation Award, 2012.

Pathania's style is unpretentious. She uses language as a workman's tool. To her, a poem comes riding on thin air, scarcely giving her time to put it down on paper. That explains her penchant for free verse, which gives her liberty to be true to her emotions. Yet, her words have a music of their own. As to the content, her poems have something or the other important to say about human condition. She may appear pedagogical, yet she is notout to make an impression. One hardly finds any apophthegms in her poetry.

***

1

Masterpiece

Marking my mind
With the tints and tangs of emotions
Bestowing upon it
A spring's sprightliness
Giving my pace a steadiness
Teaching my breath the gamut of beats
Nature created me
On the canvas of Creation
A fine landscape
A human being
Her masterpiece.

But
Nailing down with privacy
The spontaneity of my mind
Roping in my breath
With cords of propriety
Coating the shades of worldliness
Over my emotions of rich colour
Having thus polluted my mind
I was made into a faded stone
An ugly sandstone
Upon which came to grow
Prickly *trappadthohrs*[i]
Of distrust, deceit
And of many other fears and panic.

Then it struck me suddenly
That

These nails big and small
These colours and paints withal
These binding ropes too
Are all superficial
They can be undone
Washed
Broken and burnt down,
On dawning of this amazing thought
Even my *thobrs* began to bloom
Returning am I moment to moment
To my original form
As on the advent of the spring
Nature turns out
Vibrantly fresh
Beautiful
Entrancing
Life-giving
A masterpiece.

2

Only You

I am aware
I know and concede too
That those hairs of my head
Having gone grey
Are there no more
But then
Even today
At the end of my braid
The marks of your fingertips
Can clearly be seen.

I am aware
I know and concede too
That though away I am from your searching eyes
But then
Even today
In these eyes of mine
On the faded colours of my face
Your splendour appears to shine.

I am aware
I know and concede too
That to single me out
In a crowd
Is not your sight
Even so
All my memories begin to crowd
In your image.

Of the sweet memories
Of yours
A placid and warm
Stockpile I am.

3

Omission

In any man-and-woman fight
The first and the last word
Is man's always
But that shroud proved to be mischievous
It exposed
The onlookers one and all.

The matter arose
When

Looking at a colourful pink shroud
Someone said
It looks like a *suhagin*[ii]'s *perh*[iii]
She who runs the household.

And seeing a plain shroud nearby he said
Who this poor fellow might be
A single, lonely man looks he
Is there anyone to offer
Water to this deceased soul?

Said the dark pink shroud
The one who is asleep under me
Is cognisant of her husband
Despite her death
And
This sleeping one here
Conjoined her existence
With the one who sleeps under that shroud
In life as in death.

The colourless shroud kept listening
To each and every word in silence
Today the first word was of the pink shroud
And hers was the last one too.
The colourless shroud had no answer
No question either
Yes, it felt hot, angry
And even remorseful
For the omission
Of not having prescribed a limit
For a woman's shroud.

4

Arsi

On my seventh birthday
My revered grandma
Putting an *arsi* on my thumb
Entrusted me with its concerns
Arsi seemed weightier to me
Than my ear-rings
Or the nose-pin.

Apprising me
Of the rules and the ways
Of wearing *arsi*
She said –
On wiping your slate clean
On coating your *patti*[iv]
On opening your inkpot
On inscribing on your *patti*
On capping your inkpot
You shall look into your *arsi*
And I kept on looking into it.

One day
A dot of ink on my earlobe
Slandered me

My revered grandma once again
Coached me how to look into *arsi*
And explained to me the rule –
From the sunrise
Till you go to sleep at night
After every little while
You should watch your visage,

She convinced me of the *arsi*-gazing reward
And said –
It is a mirror
It is a watchman
This task you shall acquit as a rule
You shall make it instinctive.

My revered grandma's directions
I followed assiduously
Yet, only after spending much of my life
I could grasp
That
Rather than an ornament
Arsi was a means
To keep a watch
On my mind, speech and action
To form a habit
of holding a mirror unto myself.

Even though I don't need
Arsi anymore
Yet, in the jewel-box of mine
There is but one ornament –
Arsi.

5

Will

The bodies of my desires
I always buried
As my babes
In shrouds.

The shroud sometime was of longcloth
Sometime of poplin
Sometime of khaddar

And sometime of silk

Now in place of my dead desires
I recollect the colours of their shrouds
Earthy, white, black
Or I recall them by their touch
Coarse, gummy, soft
And I call those desires
With such names
As earthy, white, silky, coarse and the like.

I too am Creation's desire
One who has been brought up
In the warm lap of Nature
I have a request to make –
You put any shroud on my corpse
But, pray, don't cover my face
Remember me only by my identity.

6

Gender Bias

A poet wrote –
Making a low-humming sound
Bhoon-bhoon
Black as black can be
Came a drone
He sat on a blossom
Sucked its pollen
Stole its colour
Unfaithful, fraudulent, treacherous was he
A second flower he sat on
Without a trace of shame

And then making *bhoon bhoon*
He descended on yet another plant
Greedy drone, promiscuous
All he did was suck juice
Seduce without a qualm
Flying off, he landed on another flower
The poet wrote this poem
A wonderful poem it is!

The poet is knowledgeable
Nothing is hidden from him
He knows fully well
That insects and moths
Butterflies
Honeybees
They all suck juice
The poet knows too
That they flutter around and sit
On freshly grown flowers
Still, only drone is blamed.

In literature:
Metaphor – drone
Simile – drone
Symbol – drone
Drone, drone, only drone!

Even in these days of woman emancipation
Why should there be this gender bias
When butterfly
Is in no way less
Than drone!

7

In Wait

I am in wait –
From your duperies,
Fantastic vagaries,
Magical breezes
When you return
I have to talk
About my decrepit den –
To you.

I hope
You'd be here
Before it falls.

Whenever that be,
Come at your leisure,
Not in undue hurry.

I will certainly wait,
Though
Life doesn't.

8

Desire

Night
Moment after moment
Water from her eyes she sprinkles on earth
To see
That the dust rising
From the hooves of his horses
Should not dirty her head-cloth.

Then
Bathing in the jasmine perfume
Adorning herself in the *odhani*[v] of stars
To the accompaniment of birdsongs
Arraying a welcome *arati*[vi]
Waits she of his arrival.

And then
By and by as his rays spread
In them she subsumes herself to become *sandhuri*[vii]
Thus she fulfils her desire.

9

Hurt Heals

It seems often enough
As if man were some dirty stuff
To purge which of the dirt
Time, the Washer-man
Strikes him again and again
On the plank of circumstance;
The fabric gets much thrashed

Its colours show,
It attains its former glow.

Or, then, a dust-laden
Carpet seems man -
With sticks and staves,
It's rid of the dust
Repeatedly does the carpet
Bear the drubbing,
Its threads break,
Or get weak;
Yet it becomes
Light and fluffy.

Witnessing such turns,
One in some measure learns,
How hurt heals.

10

Reunion

Gone you had
Nowhere though
Around me you always are.

But,
After a long time,
You appeared to me
Yesterday in a dream,
Same as before.

You had
A white turban,
And white robes on

And as white was your hair;
You longingly took my hand in yours
And walked by my side.

Marvellous was that reunion,
More real than real,
It gave me new life.

All dreams
Aren't mere lovely passage
Of a few moments –
Some take away the tedium
Of years together.

11

Untitled

A drone hovering round
Sucked nectar
And away it flew,
That was nothing new.

The half-blown blossom
Did not close
The doors of its petals
To stop the drone,
Nor did it crave
The drone's dalliance.

For fully well it knew
That
Those who're intent to go

Are not to be nagged
Nor or they to be stopped.
Yes, its petals did flutter
Like someone learning
Wordlessly by rote –
'Those who're intent to go
Are not to be nagged
Nor or they to be stopped.'

12

Heart, Mind and Man

As man's mind expands,
So is his heart cramped.

With the narrowing squeeze
What get clumped together
Are negativities that once lay scattered
In the infinite expanse of his heart:
Fear, betrayal, distrust, ingratitude,
Alienation
And apprehensions without number.

These fears thicken,
They get denser,
And become more frightening;
Jumbling together
They form much bigger fears –
So, man himself turns fearsome;
Man is only his heart, after all!

13

Prayer

My prayer
Is strange and singular
Yet, like me
It's lively and original.

People look for You in shrines
Or else
In jungles, caverns and wilds
I do not go to any shrine
I having found You
Enthroned You are in the heart of mine.

No incense to You do I offer
No flowers do I offer either
Neither do I sing praises to You
This my mantra is
'I love You!'
I chant only this mantra for You.

This mantra
For some
May not be good enough
But to me it's glorious for sure
Like my heart it's clean and pure
O Lord! This prayer of mine You may accept
Me in Your love You may accept!

14

Non-violence

"I'm a supporter of non-violence"
To have tattooed this
On my forehead
I was too happy.

A mouse came running
Screeching, grinding its teeth
Chasing it
Was a cat.

I whispered to my dog
And set it after the cat
Acquitting my role of a supporter of non-violence
'All hail non-violence!"
I shouted the slogan.

15

Ants

She killed
That ant lugging away a grain of jaggery
Then the dead one
She pounded and crushed
To dregs furiously,
"Dare an ant
Find fault with my cleanliness
Make a show of the unattended rubbish
To vilify me!"
She muttered.

An ant that followed, said –

"We are here only to help
To carry away
The left off grains;
Rather than vilifying you
We have wiped your floor clean."
The ant knew
There was no use
Arguing her case
But it was necessary to tell.

Walking nearby
Four ants arrived
Their companion they lifted up
And took her away
The rest on the floor by the wall
In a queue walked away.

Ants do not normally break a queue, I don't
Ants are just ants
Not humans are they.

16

A Letter

Dear Me,
I want to have a chat with you
A chat is not feasible though
I am sending you this letter instead,
Do write to me how you are in response.

Dear Me
When did the strand of my mind
Get stuck with yours, I know not

I don't even know how you look like
I wasn't in search of you
No impatience did I have
I had consolation, peace of mind.

When you met me
My emotions sprouted
The world dwindled, sank into you
All that was mine –
Confidante-friend
Father-brother
Lover-God
You became all
Without any condition
Without any promise
Without any vow
But your mind should like me
Only that was my desire
Every breath of mine had this desire.

When for the first time
You took my hand
In both your hands
In such a manner
As if you held the *Gangajal*[viii]
In your palms
Then
I got the same sensation
As a baby gets in its mother's womb.

You put the flute to your lips
When you hugged me for the first time
Then subsuming myself in the cosmos of your being
I too had become the cosmos.

This too is a condition now
You dwell somewhere else
Yet, all those initial
Momentary perceptions
Are still fresh and almost ever with me
When my heart beats with double intensity
In the way our two hearts
Conjoined used to beat together
Then I feel
You miss me.

When I inhale
Then it seems that it's the same vital air
That might have become your breath too
And when I exhale
Then my mind knows
That the air must necessarily
Have commingled with the air
You breathe in.

It appears to me –
Now, separated were are not
We live in each other, my dear.

Awaiting your response -

17

Life

Yesterday on my way
I came across Life
The prettiest product of Creation
What features
What flexibility, suppleness

What smile
What charm!
I could only wow her
My open mouth remained agape.

Finding me stunned she said
You are looking at me
As if you had found me for the first time.

I wonder even now
Whether it was the first time
Life met me yesterday
Or was I seeing her for the first time?

Life is a moment
In the extended years of age
It is interesting like a story
Rhythmic like a poem
Theatrical like drama
Momentary like a moment.

18

Chain of Life

The spinning wheel of body
In partnership with the string of breaths
Spins out the cord of sounds
Words come into form, language is made
Then with the warp and weft of sentences
And designs of thoughts and emotions
You may make anything
Pretty and pleasant, heart-touching, captivating.

How easy and natural seems

This word-picture
But a whole life is spent
In learning
To choose right words
Make the right sentences
And apply apt punctuation marks.

Beginning with noun
And
Completed with verb
A sentence seen at the surface
Appears to be a chain of words
Worked together by commas, fullstops
Or question marks –
Much like the chain of life.

19

Water

Ever since I parted with tears
From then on
My eyes feel gritty
I don't know if it is dryness
Or else
It could be the remains of scattered tears as well
Which on drying up have congealed under my eyelids.

There is nothing thinner than water
It is not easy either to sunder water
Very delicate are its marks and seams
They may not be seen but they never go away
Like relationships.

20

Return Gift

Today, on the Mothers' Day,

Children once again sang paeans to Mother,
In many tones, in diverse ways,
They sang feelingly, gave her gifts,
Sought for her celestial blessings,
Recollected favours they had received.
Like any other offspring,
I am indebted to Mother
And shall remain till my last breath.

I too am a mother in my stead,
My children also celebrated the day,
I devote these few lines to them –
A return gift on Mothers' Day.

My children, my friends,
Listen to your mom,
Her testimony, her confession:

For nine long months
I bore you in my womb,
Sustained you on my lifeblood –
For that my womb
Was endlessly extolled,
And I?
I was high on such praise!

I revelled in the glory of mothering
To the fullest,

But never for once
Did I utter a word for you –
On how you had to spend
Those nine dreadful months
Closeted headlong
In that narrow, dark cave.
There never was any mention
Anywhere of your torment,
I too chose to be silent,
Even though as your mom,
I was fully aware
Of what your tiny selves had gone through.

You made me a mother,
You taught me the point of mothering,
Through your being,
You enriched me
With creation's exquisite experiences,
My children, I am grateful to you!
Your innocence far outweighs
My studied silence till date.

The story of giving you birth
Berates me inwardly;
Because, in truth,
I did not give you birth –
You yourself were born to me –
The land does not crack open
When a seedling comes out of a seed,
It is only the delicate sprout
That has to wrestle itself out
Of the hard earth.

When the confines of my womb

Became too narrow,
And no space was left
In any nook or cranny of that dark cavity,
The blameless chick writhed,
It thumped and whacked against the walls,
Hard as it tried to find a way out.
Each turn and twist that it made
Grew into pain;
Its pain became my pain.
I hollered, I screamed,
They all heard my screams,
They all sensed my pains,
They all valued my pains;
Yet, I never told them
Of your shrieks and your screams,
Which exited with your exit.

The air outside caught them up,
And making them a proclamation
Of your conquest,
It carried that to everyone.
The house rang with felicitations.

That victory was all of the newborn's,
Yet the credit came to me,
And I usurped it fully as my own.
But deep inside me,
They kept pricking me, its screams,
They lambasted me, its screams.

The tale of my confession
Is rather long,
And the reach of my pen falls short;
You didn't let go of your dignity,

Though little babes that you were,
Knowing well, you never confronted me,
Never did you violate good form;
I yield to you the whole world,
My children,
Not just once, but a million times over!

Children of the World,
You came out thunderously
Of the ordeal of your birth;
You may likewise in times to come
Be winners in every struggle and strife,
And thus, carry forward the tale of life!

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[1] A prickly flat spurge wort.

[2] A woman whose husband is alive, a happily married woman.

[3] A covered wooden plank on which the body of a deceased person is carried for cremation.

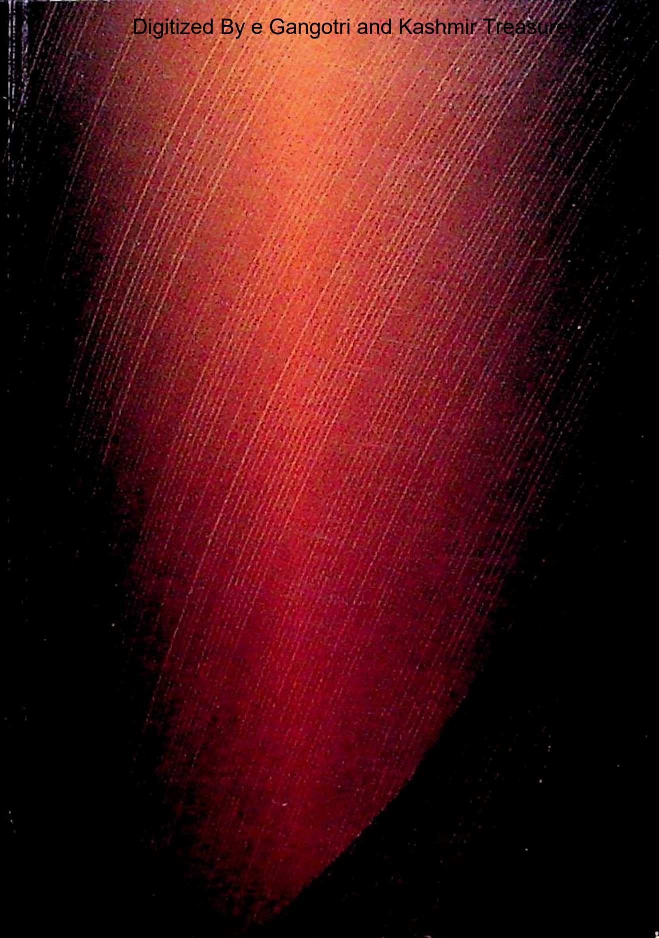
[4] A rectangular wooden board on which the school-children of earlier generations used to practise writing skills.It was coated with a thin layer of wet earth and dried up before every use.

[5] Women's sheet or shawl.

[6] Benediction.

[7] Of vermillion colour – application of vermillion in the parting of hair is symbolic of matrimony by Sanatani women.

[8] Water from the river Ganga – it is held sacred by the Sanatanis.



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